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University of Johannesburg

Faculty of Education

**The teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 at two public schools in
the Gauteng Province**

by

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215074564

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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OF
JOHANNESBURG
MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS
in

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at the

University of Johannesburg

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Date: May 2019

DECLARATION

I, Edith Shambamuto, author of this dissertation, titled “The teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 at two public schools in the Gauteng Province”, declare that this is my own work and was not submitted for assessment to any other university or institution. I further declare that the work of others is appropriately acknowledged and referenced.



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this degree to my late father, Wellington Shambamuto and my late daughter, Vimbayi Nester Chinyanga, who passed away under tragic circumstances. I really wish you both were here to witness this achievement. I MISS YOU BOTH VERY DEARLY.

Like my dad used to always say: “You will never go wrong with education.”

Nelson Mandela: *“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*



ABSTRACT

This study examined literacy in the Foundation Phase, specifically the teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 at two public schools in the Gauteng Province. Research on early reading instruction in South African classrooms is limited to some extent and South Africa is extremely challenged in achieving its language outcomes due to the eleven official languages and the “inequalities” within the public school system. When considering the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) survey (2006 and 2011), which examined the teaching and acquisition of reading, South Africa ranks amongst the lowest in the participating countries. The extent to which language factors contribute to the poor performance is not clear as language disadvantages are so highly correlated with other confounding factors such as the historical disadvantage, socio-economic status, geographical location of schools, the quality of practices of school management teams and teachers’ teaching competence levels.

The researcher argues that reading instruction is a critical factor in determining reading success in schools. Reading instruction requires that learners use reading to obtain meaning from print. Scholars, who interrogate reading in the South African context emphasize that children learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system and understand the structure of spoken words. In the assessment framework for PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), developing reading literacy is a constructive and interactive process through which active constructive meaning is derived. Teachers need to utilise effective reading strategies and also reflect on reading successes or lack thereof. Meaning has to be constructed through an engagement “between the reader and the text in the context of the reading experience with the reader using a repertoire of linguistic skills, cognitive and metacognitive strategies and background knowledge in the process. The PIRLS report also reveals that comprehension is neglected in most schools and this may have contributed to South Africa being rated amongst the worst performing country, globally.

Using the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a framework, the researcher utilised a qualitative approach to conduct an investigation into how reading is taught and assessed in Grade 2 at two public schools in the Gauteng Province.

Four Grade 2 teachers with more than five or more years of experience in teaching Grade 2 were purposively selected for this study. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with the participants. Additional data was collected by observing teachers' teaching and assessing reading in the classroom. The researcher also scrutinized and analysed official documents used by teachers in the classroom.

By means of thematic content analysis, data obtained through interviews with four Grade 2 teachers, classroom observations and the analysis of documents resulted in the researcher triangulating the various forms of data through the process of coding, categorizing and classifying data. Six broad themes emerged and these were named as follows: **Theme one:** Teachers' attitude and approaches to teaching and assessing reading; **Theme two:** Challenges experienced by Grade two teachers when teaching and assessing reading; **Theme Three:** The types of intervention required to enhance literacy levels in Foundation Phase education. **Theme Four:** The assessment of reading in Grade two; **Theme Five:** Teachers' perception of the resource materials supplied by the Department of Basic Education and **Theme Six:** The role of the School Based Support Team (SBST) and the School Assessment Team (SAT) in advancing reading in Grade 2 learners.

The findings from the study prove that the skill of reading needs to be taught, learnt and practised in order to acquire and improve reading proficiency since it's not an in-born skill. Teaching approaches and strategies utilised by teachers assist learners to become independent and confident readers. The pedagogical content knowledge of teachers influence how teachers teach reading as their use of appropriate, relevant teaching strategies will determine the success rate of reading among learners. Since the study also examined the challenges that Grade 2 teachers experienced when teaching reading, the findings in this regard were disruptive learner behaviour in class during contact time; teacher: learner ratio; lack of parental support; improper monitoring of homework and insufficient LTSM provision by the Education Department and/or school.

This study recommends a baseline assessment for reading competence be conducted early in the year when Grade 1 learners progress into Grade 2. In addition, there

should be continuous upgrading and upskilling of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge through relevant seminars, workshops etcetera hosted by DoE. Since teaching in the FP requires highly specialised skills, teachers who teach in the FP should be only those who obtain a teaching qualification consisting of four years of teacher training in FP education specifically. Another recommendation of this study is the inclusion of parental involvement as a support structure to build stronger engagement among the various stakeholders in education. Lastly, the presence of a multi-disciplinary team in schools that handle academic, psychological, emotional and social matters pertaining to both learners' and teachers' welfare is essential in all schools. Here the role of the School Based Support Team and the School Assessment Team is most important.



KEYWORDS

Teaching; Reading; Assessment; Grade 2; Public Schools; Teacher; Learner

ACRONYMS



ANA	- Annual National Assessment
BB	- Blue Books
CAPS	- Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CC	- Curriculum Coverage
CHAT	- Cultural- Historical Activity Theory
DARC	- Drop All and Read Campaign
DBE	- Department of Basic Education
DBST	- District-Based Support Team
DoBE	- Department of Basic Education
DoE	- Department of Education
EGRA	- Early Grade Reading and Assessment
FAL	- First Additional Language
FFLC	- Foundations for Learning Campaign
FP	- Foundation Phase
GDE	- Gauteng Department of Education
GP	- Gauteng Province
GPLMS	- Government Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy
HL	- Home Language
HOD	- Head of Department

LAB	- Laboratory
LLEA	- Language Learning Experience Approach
LOLT	- Language of Learning and Teaching
LTSM	- Learner Teacher Support Material
NEEDU	- National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
PIRLS	- Progress in International Reading Literacy Study Survey
RLC	- Read to Lead Campaign
SA	- South Africa
SAL	- Second Additional Language
SAT	- School Assessment Team
SBST	- School Based Support Team
T1	- Teacher 1
T2	- Teacher 2
T3	- Teacher 3
T4	- Teacher 4
THRASS	- Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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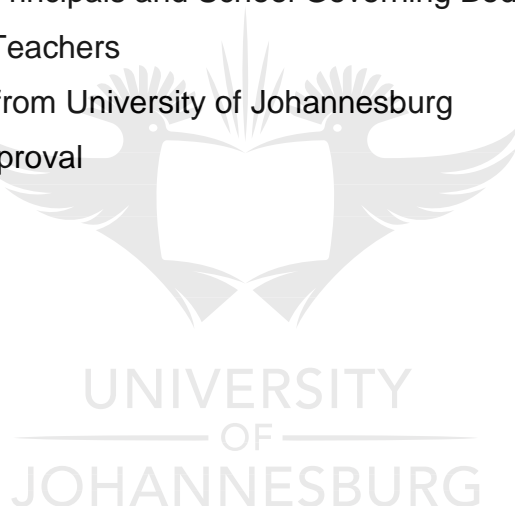
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH

The five main components to the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase, according to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (hereafter referred to as CAPS), from the Department of Basic Education in South Africa (DoE, 2011a, p. 14), include, “phonemic awareness, word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency”. Pretorius, Jackson, McKay, Murray and Spaul (2016, p.10) present four components that predict early reading success and these are namely, “phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge and phonics, word recognition as well as oral reading fluency.” The foundations for learning highlights that each of these components begin in Grade R, while the complexity of learning these components continues to be reinforced in Grades 1, 2 and 3. Despite the continued teaching and reinforcement of these components, Munger (2016) contends that there is still no marked difference in learners’ reading as it is complex and not an inborn skill. Findings as per the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study Survey (PIRLS) report by Pretorius and Spaul (2016, p. 3), revealed that comprehension (a component of reading) is a much neglected area in most schools. The report also refers to there being, “much anecdotal evidence of teachers focusing primarily on code-based reading activities in the classroom and neglecting meaningful literacy practices.”

Zimmerman and Smit (2014, p. 2) also argue that by focusing too much on “fluency and decoding skills in the foundational levels of education may mean that learners enter secondary school with functional skills in fluency and decoding but lack the ability to comprehend.” Thus, South African teachers, no different to teachers internationally, face the dilemma of identifying the best approaches to help learners to read with understanding. Davis (2006) postulates that there is a need to read words and understand what the words and language mean from a given text. Munger (2016) shares similar views, that as word recognition skills and language comprehension ability are two equally important components in learning to read.

In South Africa, there is ongoing concern about the development of learners’ literacy skills (van Standen and Howie, 2010), with an increasing number of learners who present many reading challenges (Hlaethwa, 2013). These challenges were also

highlighted by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshega, in her press statement for the Annual National Assessment (ANA), (DOE, 2012) where she states that,

“it is worrying precisely because the critical skills of literacy and numeracy are fundamental to further education and achievements in the world of education and work. Many learners lack proper foundations in literacy and numeracy and so struggle to progress in the school system and into post-school education and training”.

Such a view is supported by data from the Department of Education, Evaluation and Assessment Tests for Reading (2008a), which shows that only 15% of learners in Grade 6 achieved the required literacy level. Moreover, Dirks (2013) indicates that the South African Education system was ranked 133rd out of 142 countries in the world by The World Economic Forum, highlighting one of the biggest challenges when children exit school without the 3 basic R's: Read, wRite and aRithmetic.

The National Education Evaluation & Development Unit (NEEDU) National Report 2012, published in April, 2013, claims that the expertise of the teacher in the classroom has to be a deliverable competence, which draws heavily on their experience, reflection and peer interaction. As a result, lesson deliverance is of paramount importance to help the learner understand the subject, throughout his/her learning life.

Taylor and von Fintel (2016, p. 76) point out that South Africa is extremely challenged in achieving its language outcomes because of the 11 official languages, of which only English and Afrikaans have a “developed academic literature”. South Africa's performance in the PIRLS surveys of (2006 and 2011) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study surveys of 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2011 (Taylor and von Fintel, 2016, p. 75) have demonstrated that the country ranks “amongst the lowest in the participating countries”. How does language factors contribute to the country's poor performance? This is not clear as “language disadvantages are highly connected with other difficult factors such as the country's “historical disadvantage, socio-economic status and geographical location” according to Taylor and von Fintel (2016, p. 75). The excellence levels of school management teams, together with the “quality of teachers” or lack thereof could be other debilitating factors.

Drawing on Moats (1999) cited by Zimmerman and Smit (2014, p. 6), the researcher argues that “reading instruction is a critical factor in preventing reading problems.”

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over the past two decades, much has been written about the importance of teaching reading to learners using different strategies to improve their reading skills. Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) state that sufficient reading instruction requires “that children use reading to obtain meaning from print” and have “regular and intensive opportunities to read through exposure to frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships”. Children learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system and understand the structure of spoken words from an early age. The researcher aligns herself to Zimmerman and Smit, (2014, p. 2), who state that “developing reading literacy is a constructive and interactive process with readers” and this can be achieved through “actively constructing meaning, knowing effective reading strategies and how to reflect on reading”. Reading association is constructed through an engagement “between the reader and the text in the context of the reading experience. In this study, the researcher recognizes “reading” as a huge challenge in public schools in South Africa and seeks to identify how reading is taught in Grade 2, since the foundation for all learning begins in the Foundation Phase.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The researcher has taught grade 2 for almost five years and her personal experiences of teaching and assessing reading at this level has created an interest in her to pursue this investigation. From her experiences, she has observed diverse learners’ progressing into Grade 2 with varying levels of reading competency achieved in Grade 1. The extent to which this skill can be further developed is dependent on how the Grade 2 teachers continue to develop and support the learners towards achieving reading competency. This investigation therefore explores how reading is taught and assessed in Grade 2 at two public schools in the Gauteng Province. The researcher would also like to explore and find solutions to the challenges that Grade 2 teachers face when teaching and assessing reading to Grade 2 learners.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INQUIRY

This research is guided by the following main research question:

- How do teachers teach and assess reading in Grade 2?

To address this question, the study will consider the following sub-questions:

- What are the experiences of Grade 2 teachers when teaching and assessing reading in Grade 2?
- What planning and preparation precedes the teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2?
- How do Grade 2 teachers address any challenges in their teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2?

To pursue the research question, the study aims to explore how teachers teach and assess reading in the home language in Grade 2. In order to realize this aim, the following objectives are set:

- Explore the experiences of Grade 2 teachers when teaching and assessing reading in Grade 2.
- Examine the planning and preparation that precedes the teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2.
- Identify techniques that teachers use to address any challenges when teaching and assessing reading in Grade 2.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is framed by Engeström's (2001) "third-generation activity theory", called cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). CHAT offers researchers in English a potential tool for researching the complexities and contradictions within the teaching and learning of the subject (Thompson, 2015, p. 4), in this case, reading. The central issue in the activity theory remains the object, and as explained by Engeström (1999, p. 31), an object is that which links the individual action to the collective activity. In this case, the object is the learners with the desired outcomes of learning to read. The subject is the teacher. The activity system's tools will include a wide array of resources that are used to teach and assess reading. The rules in this activity system will refer to the regulations and standards pertaining to how reading should be taught. Conflict is inherent in an activity system (Engestrom, 1999). A CHAT research focus, in analysing how reading is taught, does not simply describe how students and/or teachers act or behave within the activity system. It will instead examine processes

and procedures that affect changes within an organisation/institution, as contradictions within problematic situations (reading challenges) are encountered (Thompson, 2015). How teachers address conflicts that arise when teaching and assessing reading can afford opportunities for transforming conflicts into zones of fertile learning (Tsui, Lopez-Real and Edwards, 2009).

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research can be described as a generic qualitative design. This research design is considered suitable for this study as the researcher endeavors to simply comprehend (Maree, 2011, p. 259) the complex nature of teaching and assessing reading to Grade 2 learners as a central phenomenon in two schools. A holistic picture was created by analyzing words, sentences, phrases, progress reports and views and opinions of participants while conducting the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 2009). The aim in conducting qualitative research is to view the phenomena through the “lens” of the participants, (Maree, 2011, p. 187, McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p. 322).

1.6.1 Participants and the Research Sites

The research sites were two public primary schools in the Gauteng province, purposefully selected as they share common characteristics, such as diverse learner and teacher population, similar poverty index, comparable resourcing and are formerly disadvantaged schools where English is the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). These schools were also considered convenient and accessible for this study. At the two schools, three Grade 2 teachers were selected per school through purposive sampling, thus a total of six teachers. Careful consideration was given to teachers who fit the criteria of five and more years of experience in teaching Grade 2 learners. The participants were interviewed at their workplaces after mutually securing a suitable time and venue.

1.6.2 Data Collection

Individual in-depth interviews (Babbie and Mouton, 2008) were conducted with the six participants with a view to elicit their own understanding of teaching and assessing reading at Grade 2 level. All interviews were audio-recorded and stored in a safe place.

The data will be made available to the participants if required. To further gather first-hand data of Grade 2 teachers' classroom practices when teaching and assessing reading, the researcher used a pre-designed observation schedule (Merriam, 2009) to observe the instructional strategies employed in reading lessons in each of the participant's classroom. The researcher observed two lessons in each of the participant's classroom. This assisted the researcher to determine the correlation between lesson planning and preparation and the actual delivery of the reading lesson in the classroom.

The interview schedule and the observation schedule were piloted with two Grade 2 teachers who are not part of the main sample. Where required, both the observation schedule and the interview schedule were refined for suitability and relevance and to avoid any biasness (Bell, 2005). The interview questions and probes were structured in a way that allowed the researcher to probe for information in a relaxed and non-threatening manner.

The teachers that were interviewed possess valuable insights into the challenges faced in teaching and assessing reading (the researcher makes this assumption as the teachers have five and more years of teaching reading to Grade 2 learners). The Grade 2 learners' understanding of basic concepts of vowels, consonants, phonemes, and graphemes, the English alphabet sounds and names were examined. Frequently used sight words, basic comprehension skills, the reading of simple sentences and short stories while ascertaining their levels into becoming emergent readers were interrogated.

Teachers' progress records and documents, such as learners' reports, formative and summative assessment tasks and activities and teachers' work schedules (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010) were scrutinized to provide the researcher with a better understanding of how the learners are assessed in reading in line with the CAPS curriculum.

1.6.3 Realibility and Validity

The researcher included procedures to ensure reliability and validity. Reliability in qualitative research refers to the "consistency and dependability" of the researcher's findings (Merriam, 2002, p. 27; Creswell, 2009, p. 190) while validity refers to the "accuracy of the results" (Creswell, 2009, p.190). In order for the study to be

“trustworthy, valid and reliable”, the researcher took note of Lincoln & Guba (1985, p. 300) who stated that “collection, analyzing and interpretation of data” will only be reliable if supported by an “audit trail.” Hence a carefully constructed “chain of evidence” was maintained by the researcher. In addition, the researcher triangulated data from different data sources such as interviews, class activities and assessment tasks obtained from the four research participants.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

In keeping with qualitative data, the researcher first read through all the raw data (observation notes, the documents analysis and notes and the interview transcripts to get “a general sense of the data as a whole”, using Tesch’s method (1990) cited in Creswell (2009, p. 186). Broad ideas, reflective notes and thoughts were noted by the researcher. Secondly, the data was segmented into meaningful units and coded with clear descriptions and meanings. The underlying meanings were interrogated and emerging topics which are similar were identified and clustered. The topics were coded into categories and all related categories were grouped and synthesized into themes in accordance with the research question and sub-questions. (Creswell, 2009, p.186). The analysis of the data into themes made it easier to understand and interpret the findings of the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2012, p. 45). The literature review also served as an important additional avenue to contextualize the themes to gain a broader understanding of the findings.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Written permission from the Gauteng Department of Education, the School Governing Bodies of the two schools and the two School Principals was obtained. Ethical clearance for the study was also obtained from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, University of Johannesburg.

All participants’ contributions will be respected as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002) indicate the importance of respecting privacy, anonymity and confidentiality at all times. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter one includes the introduction, background and overview of the study. The theoretical framework underpinning the study is outlined. The research questions and sub-questions, aims and objectives of the study are clearly stated followed by research design and methods. Lastly, the ethical considerations employed in this study concludes this chapter.

Chapter two presents a review of the literature relating to the teaching and assessing of reading at Grade 2 level. Specific research studies relevant to this study are examined and reported on in this chapter.

Chapter three gives a detailed description of the research design and methods used in this study. The research sites, population, sample, data collection and analysis and the research ethical measures that were observed is outlined.

Chapter four comprises a detailed analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the three data collection methods and these are interviews, observations and document analysis.

Chapter five discusses the implications of the research findings for the study, offers recommendations and also focuses on the implications for educational practitioners, researchers and policy makers.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an introduction, background and orientation to the study. The research problem was stated with an outline of the study's aims and objectives. The study was contextualised within a qualitative design. Chapter two will focus on a review of literature pertinent to the research question and sub-questions of this investigation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided the introduction and background to the teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2. This chapter focuses on literature that addresses the skill of reading, which is one of the key components of teaching language and literacy in the Foundation Phase (FP). Moreover, this chapter interrogates reading from an international and national perspective. Literature examined on reading, alerts the researcher to some challenges experienced by Grade 2 teachers and the possible factors that contribute to reading challenges at Grade 2 level. Additionally, the influence of both an enhanced home environment as well as a conducive classroom environment that promotes reading are examined. Furthermore, this chapter also scrutinizes different programmes that are used to assist in the teaching of reading as well as possible factors that contribute to reading challenges at Grade 2 level. Lastly, the chapter focuses on the support required by learners and teachers to enable them to function optimally in the teaching and assessing of reading at Grade 2 level.

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF READING

Over the past two decades, a broad definition of literacy has evolved. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2004a) defines reading as “a co-component of literacy” that has the “ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts”. Reading is also described as a “complex cognitive process” of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning for reading comprehension” (Hans and Hans, 2013, p.15). The reader’s previous knowledge, attitude and experience therefore has an impact on the reader’s communication, language acquirement and sharing of information and ideas.

Henning (2016, p. 2) in her editorial article argues for a “*reading as learning*” view, meaning that “concepts can be articulated in language symbols that are spoken and language symbols that are written, but when the two modalities meet, reading can serve as a source and a mechanism for learning beyond personal interaction”. The

author further emphasises that, “when young learners are able to read on their own and explore knowledge opportunities that are hidden to the not-yet literates, they gain a lasting advantage”. Leipzig (2012, p.1) asserts that,

“reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation”.

As reading is considered making meaning from print as it involves first identifying words and then constructing its meaning. The author further states that reading is,

“a complex system which derives meaning from: skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or speech sounds are connected to print; the ability to read unfamiliar words and read fluently as well as gather sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension and lastly the development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print and maintenance of a motivation to read”.

Common to the various definitions and explanations presented by the different experts in the field is the notion that learning to read is indeed not a simple or linear process. Instead, learning to read with understanding is a complex, multifaceted practice that encompasses different skills and knowledge.

The attention now shifts to the importance of teaching reading in the Foundation Phase, which the researcher discusses next.

2.3 IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING READING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

Its importance is emphasised by Ebele, Ada and Ebunoluwa (2011, p. 211) and the Department of Education National Reading Strategy (2008c) who regard reading as “a crucial learner-activity in the learning process”, as it enables one “access to information and knowledge” that helps in “life-long learning”. Roe and Smith (2010) argue that “reading is a complex act” that must be learnt so that further learning can take place through continuous reading to understand.

UNESCO (2004a, p.1) declares that, “literacy lies at the heart of UNESCO’s concerns and makes up an essential part of its mandate, being the right to education set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. These concerns have to do with

promoting the meaningful acquisition and application of literacy in laying the basis for positive social transformation, justice, and personal and collective freedom.” Supportively Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky and Seidenberg (2001, p. 31) claim that “literacy is an essential ingredient of success in societies, where much information is conveyed by the written word”. They further highlight the importance of understanding the source of children’s difficulties in learning to read as well as how they can overcome difficulties in reading.

The Department of Education (DoE, 2008b, p.18) states that reading is, “without doubt, the most important linguistic ability that needs to be developed in young children”. Reading has to be taught as it is not a skill, like speaking, that can be learnt by observing others (Hlaithwa, 2013). Henning (2016, p. 1) claims that a reader needs “some knowledge of the morphemic structures, the syntax and the lexicon of the language”, and moreover the “developing of skills to decode the discourse to understand the text”.

Hlaithwa (2013) views reading as a technical process, since we read “word by word” or “letter by letter”. For example, there is a positive “relationship between reading and academic performance” according to Pretorius and Machet, (2004, p. 46). Reading is also the most important learning tool that enables individuals to acquire new knowledge and to consolidate, modify and expand knowledge bases (Bohlmann and Pretorius, 2002, p. 205). Reading can therefore be considered the vehicle that allows learners to “access information in an information-driven society” (Hugo, 2011a).

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU report, 2013), acknowledges that reading is the “most important skill to be developed in the FP”, as it is through reading that learners engage meaningfully with what they learn. Reading serves as a fundamental “foundation” upon which all other knowledge acquisition and learning takes place (Roe and Smith, 2010; Spaul, 2016).

Once a child has mastered the fundamental skill of basic reading, this skill can be transferred to other subjects, where a broader and deeper understanding is required. This makes possible the acquisition of new knowledge in other subjects (UNESCO, 2004b, p.13) as learners’ access information primarily through reading. Learners who do not acquire basic reading skills in the FP struggle to participate in curriculum

matters in higher grades, resulting in them feeling alienated by the school system and hence their progress is hampered (Pretorius, et al., 2016).

Foundational literacies learnt in the early years of school are also important in the learning of new literacies, such as information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the use of the internet (Le Cordeur, 2010; Le Cordeur, 2012). In a fast developing technological and information age, the ability to read with understanding becomes even more important if learners are to critically evaluate the usefulness of this information (Le Cordeur, 2012). It is therefore essential that learners acquire effective reading skills if they are to function effectively in a 21st century environment. Berger (2009) argues that children are intuitive with a natural curiosity to learn, explore and become emotionally involved in their learning. Hugo (2011b, p. 248) makes a point that for learners at school and students at tertiary level, the foundational ability to read content helps them to understand and acquire new knowledge in their respective careers. This necessitates the presence of a well-developed reading programme with sound approaches enhancing reading skills as crucial for effective communication leading to competence in the respective professions. Rayner, et al. (2001) point out that a “literate population is key to the functioning” of any society, therefore, people with inadequate reading skills are likely to be less literate than those who read with ease.

Justice and Sofka (2010) note three important objectives of the ability to read print in order to convey meaning and these are: to get meaning from written print/text; the ability to interpret environmental print and to acquire knowledge about specific and varying functions indicated by print within the environment and lastly, to be aware that reading is an act in which persons participate and that learning serves various purposes in one’s life.

Rayner et al. (2001) note the following propositions regarding the importance of preparing learners for initial reading:

- Identify the preconditions for learning to read.
- Recognize what a child needs to do in order to learn to read effectively.
- Examine the process/es when children start to learn to read.
- How does a person progress from being a non-reader to becoming an effective reader?

Lastly, Rayner et al., (2001, p. 31) place emphasis on “skilled reading”, they write about scientists wanting to “learn more about the starting point, the learning process, and the end of learning to read”. They also effectively address the vital fourth issue and that is the “use of appropriate educational practices when teaching reading”.

The following section examines the introduction of reading in the early years.

2.4 THE EARLY YEARS: THE BEST TIME TO INTRODUCE READING

Cunha and Heckman (2007) demonstrate how teaching and learning investments are greatest during children’s early years of learning. The authors allude to people benefitting from education and development the most, when taught at eight years old or younger. The authors argue, that benefits of being taught at this age far outweigh the costs of attempting to remediate learning problems later in life.

Similarly, Hugo (2010) writes about the early years as the most important in the development of reading, writing and thinking skills and this coincides with the teaching of reading and learning to read in the FP (Grades 1-3). Hugo (2010, p. 133) suggests the keenness of a child to read when entering the so-called “big” school, transitioning from pre-school/grade R into Grade one. Hugo (2011a, p.267) points out further that before children start learning to read, they would have acquired “certain basic language skills in their home language, that includes phonemic, print, graphic, morphological and syntactic awareness”. These basic skills according to Hugo (2011a) are not enough because successful reading also depends on “development of comprehension skills”. The reading process therefore requires continuous practice, development, creativity and refinement.

Drawing on Kozulin (1992) cited by Henning (2016, p. 2), the researcher notes that “reading, right from the onset, can be seen as a socially meaningful activity”, meaning that “a beginner reader learns to read” when participating in an act or drama/play. During this participation, the beginner reader is learning to read and comprehend while learning the basics. If a skill such as reading is instilled in a child at an early stage, it helps to build a child’s future and personal being. Being a FP teacher for more than fifteen years, the researcher argues that children learn through repetition, and if

reading is done repeatedly on a daily basis, it increases children's chances of mastering the basic skills required for reading.

The NEEDU report, (2013) states that learners should read independently at the end of Grade one. In the event of learners struggling to master skills required for reading, Grade two and three teachers should adopt effective strategies to motivate and encourage struggling learners to achieve goals in preparation for successful reading. Through motivation, practice and reinforcement learners can acquire reading skills (Roe & Smith, 2010). Hugo (2010) highlights that for many young learners, exposure to learning resources and materials and learning to read only begins in the FP classrooms, where teachers play a huge role in enabling learners to acquire the fundamental reading skills (Roe and Smith, 2010). The success or failure in reading impacts on future performance, hence a solid and informed introduction to reading on the part of FP teachers prepares learners for further learning and development in young children (Singh, 2010).

The next section examines literacy levels in selected countries on the African continent.

2.5 LITERACY LEVELS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

Spaull (2016, p. 2) makes the point that illiteracy practically "does not exist in most wealthy or even middle-income countries". Furthermore, the author emphasises that "illiteracy rates among those who have completed Grade 4 are in the low single digits in wealthy countries like, England (5%), the U.S. (2%), Finland (1%) and less than 50% in most middle income countries such as Colombia (28%), Indonesia (34%) and Iran (24%), (Spaull, 2016, p. 2).

In another country on the African continent, namely, Nigeria, the literacy rate is at 57% (Odukoya, Bowale, & Okunlola, 2018). One of the factors that contribute to these low rates are teachers' ability or inability to apply reading skills to texts (Ebele et al., 2011, p.211). Moreover, teachers make use of limited teaching strategies to teach reading skills (Ebele et al., 2011). Ojo (2003) indicates that teaching learners how to read in order to understand information has for some years been abandoned and this can be

verified, as some learners continue to struggle to read. A scrutiny by Ebele, et al., (2011, p. 211) of what prevails in some tertiary institutions in Nigeria concerning learners' apathy to reading, suggest that students know little or nothing about the skills required for reading to facilitate acquisition of information. They further state that about 70% of teachers in the public schools in Anambra State (Nigeria), are unaware that reading as a skill has to be taught. For this reason, the State sees it pertinent to teach reading skills in primary schools. McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) highlight that children's approaches and motivation for successful academic reading ability has to be cultivated early in life. This initiative will go a long way in influencing their information attainment pattern throughout life. Ojedokun (2007) is of the belief that teaching children how to read is a "fundamental prerequisite for lifelong learning" and a basic requirement for the information age.

In Namibia, a national study on literacy and numeracy was conducted by the National Institute for Education Development (NIED: 2012, p. 29-30 & 38-40). This was done among FP classes and highlighted the illiteracy level among the learners, especially those in rural areas. The assessment test was administered mostly in the learners' mother tongue, which are African languages and in some instances English, Afrikaans and Portuguese. Learners at grade 1 and grade 4 levels were required to read words, texts, sentences and phrases. At grade 4 level, English assessment, fluency, accuracy and reading comprehension were tested. Learners from urban schools scored an average of 75 percent, semi urban learners scored 63 percent, while rural schools scored 56 percent. The difference in the results were attributed to the phonemic relation between English and mother tongue, difficulties in blending, reading by spelling and word recognition, among others.

Kenya also faces similar challenges like South Africa, where developing children's literacy skills are a huge priority. Only 32% of Grade 3 learners were able to "read Grade 2 level texts in English or Kiswahili language, since this was the language in which reading was assessed, (Piper and Zuilkowski, 2015). The authors found that in their assessment of fluency in reading among Grade 2 learners in Kiswahili level 1 (L1) and English level 2 (L2), reading comprehension levels were low in English L2, but only slightly better in Kiswahili, pointing to the reading deficiencies within the Kenyan education system. In addition, Grade 2 learners scored an average of 30

words correct per minute (WCPM) in L2 English reading, indicating a very slow reading rate.

Bennel (2010) emphasises the benefits of planned in-service training programme that teachers in Malawi (and Madagascar) received, which in turn improved their countries' literacy level. Such positive outcomes point to the importance of a well-structured curriculum, informed guidance and support for teachers to improve their knowledge and expertise in teaching reading. Contrary to Malawi and Madagascar, Botswana's lower primary teachers received limited training when a new curriculum was introduced (Moalosi and Molwane, 2010). Teachers were not afforded the required in-service training to prepare and empower them for curriculum implementation and this led to them teaching only some components of the curriculum, thereby creating "gaps" in teachers understanding and experiences of how to teach reading (Makeleni and Sethusha, 2014).

In South Africa, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) points to a 58% illiteracy rate, which means 58% of Grade 4 to 5 learners are unable to read for meaning in any language. Why Grade 4? The South African curriculum advocates that children must "learn to read" in the lower grades (grades 1-3) and from grade 4, they must "read to learn". Henning (2016, p. 2) makes a point that "when most children start reading, around the age of six, the plasticity of the brain is optimal". The author further elaborates that children "begin to change their naive theories of natural phenomena and their newly acquired skill in reading and making meaning from text", This transition assists them in their continued learning.

The focus now shifts to the current situation of reading in South Africa.

2.6 THE CURRENT SITUATION OF READING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Fleisch (2008, p. 98) highlights the "crisis in primary school education" in South Africa, namely, learners' performance in reading and (mathematics and other subjects). The crisis is learners' and students' inability to read proficiently from primary school, through to secondary school and right up to tertiary level (Pretorius et al., 2016, p. 4).

According to The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga in a "Drop all and Read Campaign", (<https://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-angie-motshekga-drop-all->

[and-read-campaign-6-sep-2015-0000](#)) at various primary schools in Johannesburg, indicated that only 14% of South Africans read books and only 5% of parents engage in reading to their children. The Minister said the “love of reading” needs to be instilled in the first five years of a child’s life and one should read daily. The Minister further emphasised that reading for pleasure makes it easier when learners need to read for information.

Hugo (2011b, p. 249) points out that because the “world is becoming a global village” and people move easily from one country to another, the knowledge and experience that are brought to the classroom are increasingly more varied. Therefore, teachers who teach reading have to use what young learners bring to school, that is, their cultural schemas, whilst utilising a variety of approaches to teach reading. In recent years, FP teachers in South Africa have experienced rapid curriculum changes, which are influenced by the rapid increase in global knowledge, technology and skills. South Africa is now remodeling its curriculum to meet the worldwide standards of education (Hugo, 2011b; Makeleni and Sethusha, 2014). Unfortunately, the findings of the NEEDU progress report (2016) claims that teachers in the 134 schools visited displayed a lack of effective teaching strategies to teach lower primary (FP) learners how to read. A positive initiative by the Reading Advisory Committee is to continue to provide advice on reading matters, advance reading support in the provinces and pilot the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), which commenced in 2015, in 100 schools per province (DoE, 2015a).

The NEEDU Report (2013, p.37) reveals that Grade 2 classes were visited in 2012 to observe how reading was conducted and to ascertain the appropriateness of reading materials used to the grade level of learners. The report indicates that reading in FP should consist of “an integrated reading and writing focus time”. Reading lessons should be conducted using the five components of teaching reading which are: “phonemic awareness, word recognition (sight words and phonics), comprehension, vocabulary and fluency”. Aspects of these components need to be experienced in reading activities daily and augmented in complexity as learners’ progress through the different levels in the FP. The current curriculum, Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), divides reading requirements into four distinct activities: “shared reading (and writing); group guided reading; paired or independent reading; and phonics (including phonemic awareness)” according to DoE, (2011a; 2011b).

Spaull (2016) argues that despite the design and structure of the CAPS curriculum being explicit on “how to teach reading in the FP”, majority of learners in South African public schools are not fluent in reading in any language by the end of Grade 3. This poses a mandatory constraint to achieving improved educational outcomes for the less advantaged, since most classrooms consist of diverse learners with varying ability levels in reading. Taylor, (2008a, p. 3) states that “text is the carrier of knowledge”, and reading and writing of complex texts is therefore the essence of schooling. Spaull and Hoadley, (2017, p.78) indicate that literacy competence forms the basis for all formal learning, therefore a firm foundation of reading is essential for all learners in the lower primary school. There are many explanations for the poor literacy levels in the FP, one of which points to teacher training according to Lombard, Meyer, Warnich and Wolhutter (2010) and Spaull, (2016). The authors indicate that the teacher training programmes provided for FP teachers is not appropriately structured, since background information and guidelines on lesson planning and preparation are not sufficiently addressed in these programmes. This deficiency leads to a lack of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) on the part of FP teachers to teach phonetics in Literacy and even Mathematics according to Jansen, (2009), who argues the point that teachers are undergoing various challenges as a result of the substandard quality of teacher training they receive.

Spaull (2016) expresses the need to recognize why previous initiatives were unsuccessful and the necessity for both capacity building and accountability, which is lacking on the part of service providers. Regarding in-service training/workshops in South Africa (SA), Lombard, et al., (2010, p.16); Maphalala (2006, p. 67) and Matshidiso, (2007, p.109) agree that “literacy levels in South Africa are low”, and that scheduled workshops provided by the Department of Education (DoE) assist minimally in capacitating teachers’ PCK. According to the authors, teachers are of the opinion that the workshops do not add much value as very often the workshops are poorly planned or delivered by ill-informed presenters.

Hugo (2011b, p. 249) is of the view that many South African learners attend school without the necessary language skills such as: knowing how to listen, how to decipher non-verbal messages, how to follow directions and how to handle books to master the intricate task of learning to read. This leads to ineffective lesson delivery as the teacher

spends valuable teaching time attending to issues related to disciplining the learners instead of teaching.

The second reason points to learners' prior knowledge when entering school. Dorr (2006), claims that the initial broad base of knowledge comes from homes and families, not the classroom. Teachers therefore teach as per the requirements stipulated by the CAPS curriculum but find that home circumstances affect learners' levels entering school with different levels of cognitive development. Kendeou, Lynch, Van Der Broek, Espin, White and Kremer (2005) argue that learners' intelligible mental depiction of the text is based on the text itself and also on the readers' background knowledge. If the background knowledge is limited, learners experience difficulty in grasping key components of reading.

Ultimately, the goal for the Department for Basic Education (DBE) should be: "Every child must read for understanding, fluency and for comprehension by the end of Grade 3" according to Spaul, (2016), who also asserts that not all public schools in South Africa are "born equal". This statement could be interpreted as differences, amongst others, in resource allocation, leadership deficiency, staff allocation, and professional development etcetera. Therefore initiatives to improve the teaching and learning of reading in foundation phase classrooms must take these differences into consideration.

The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, in her press statement emphasised that "throughout the world, school education systems are focusing on Literacy (and Numeracy) initiatives as a means to improving the performance and learning outcomes and a learner's ability to read, write and calculate is considered a vital toolkit in the pursuit of success and in managing life in general".

The different initiatives and programmes utilised to teach reading is explored next.

2.7 DIFFERENT INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES USED IN THE TEACHING OF READING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

There have been many different initiatives and campaigns to improve the quality of reading in South Africa at national, provincial and district levels. These include initiatives such as Foundations for Learning Campaign (FFLC) 2008-2011, Early Grade Reading and Assessment (EGRA), Drop All and Read Campaign (DARC) 2015-2019, which are explained in the paragraphs that follow.

Hugo (2010, p.134) postulates the importance of preparation to ensure learners smooth ability to read various “reading readiness activities”. Young learners enter school without the basic tools they need for the complex task of reading such as listening and understanding non-verbal messages.

2.7.1 Foundations for Learning Campaign 2008 – 2011 (FFLC)

During the period 2008-2011, a campaign was developed to help improve literacy skills in South Africa (DoE, 2008b, p. 4) The “FFLC” was a four-year campaign aimed at creating a “national focus to improve reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children” (DoE, 2008b, p. 4). According to Singh (2009, p.2), this campaign was developed in response to studies conducted over a number of years that corroborate South African learners’ incompetence in reading, writing and numeracy. The aim of the Department of Education was to ensure that quality teaching and learning took place by stipulating minimum expectations for teachers on what and how to teach reading. This included the teaching of reading on a daily basis, for at least 30 minutes in every FP class, (DoE, 2008b). In addition, resources to maximise effective literacy teaching and learning (that include wall charts, textbooks, workbooks etcetera.) were provided. Progress records were maintained for each learner to monitor individual performance from Grade R to Grade 6, with the condition that all learners undergo annual assessments in Literacy.

Singh (2010, p. 2) regarded FFLC as “a laudable attempt” by the DoE to address the level of reading, writing and numeracy. It identified daily activities for literacy and recommended resources to be used when teaching reading. However, the major challenge was the implementation of this campaign in all public schools in South

Africa. The reasons cited by Singh (2010) for the unsuccessful implementation are many, namely: competing priorities in spending, lack of appropriate resources, political will to change, and learner and teacher discipline. Meier, (2011, p. 552) identified other issues that impacted negatively on the successful implementation of the FFLC and these were schools not taking this campaign seriously as teachers were unprepared/underprepared for the FFLC. Teachers also felt the FFLC increased their administrative duties at the expense of teaching time.

2.7.2 Early Grade Reading and Assessment – (EGRA)

The Early Grade Reading and Assessment (EGRA) was created to “provide a reliable and valid measure of skills that contribute to reading acquisition” (Dubeck and Gove, 2015, p. 315). The assessment is a diagnostic reading test that is administered orally. The tests were structured in such a way that in about 15 minutes a teacher would be able to assess the learner’s ability to perform essential pre-reading and reading skills, through using the four main assessment components namely: recognition of initial sounds, word recognition, passage and reading (DoE, 2015a)

EGRA was established in 2006 and has since been revised for use in over 65 countries and in over 100 dialects (Dubeck and Gove, 2015, p. 315). In SA, the project was launched in 2015 in the FP in Grades 1-3 in 100 schools per province (DoE, 2015a). It was successfully implemented and sustained in Grade 2 and 3 in 2016.

EGRA was piloted in Namibia in 2012. (European Commission, 2012, p. 43-47) (<http://www.eddataglobal.org/>). A one-on-one oral evaluation that assesses competence in “phonemic awareness, phonic decoding skills, vocabulary knowledge, reading fluency and comprehension” was administered to Grades 2, 3 and 4 learners from the Oshikoto, Kavango and Hardap regions (Shingenge, 2017). The main findings of the EGRA pilot project in Namibia indicated that several learners had difficulties in the “areas of reading sounds, letter names, reading speed, fluency and reading with comprehension”. These problems reflected confusion between letter sounds and letter names, their reading speed and fluency were low in comparison to the benchmark and in some instances children who seemed to sound letters correctly did not necessarily have reading fluency, nor did they score higher in the comprehension questions according to Shingenge, (2017).

Shingenge (2017) and Dubeck and Gove (2015) mention limitations to the EGRA project. Shingenge notes that the reading problems demonstrated by learners originated from a lack of clear approaches to teaching reading, teachers' shortage of knowledge of phonics as an approach to teaching initial literacy, and the trend of not teaching reading comprehension. A similar view expressed by Spaul, (2016) who claims that the ultimate reasons for learners' poor literacy levels in lower primary schools is that teachers lack the knowledge and skill to teach reading in the Foundation Phase. Dubeck and Gove (2015. p. 316) allude to EGRA not measuring childrens' "literacy behaviours, background knowledge or attitudes" about reading, which the authors regard as being important in the success of teaching reading.

2.7.3 The Read to Lead Campaign 2015 — 2019

The Read to Lead Campaign (RLC) (DoE, 2015b) was officially launched on 22 July 2015 and aims to continue until 2019. The campaign focusses on improving the reading abilities of all South African children whilst the main purpose of the campaign is to ensure that all learners are able to exhibit age appropriate reading levels by 2019. This campaign is in response to the national, regional and international studies that have been conducted during the past few years indicating that South African children are unable to read at the expected levels, and are also not capable to accomplish tasks that demonstrate key skills linked to literacy. Whilst the improvement in learner achievement is an important aim of the campaign, children should be encouraged to make reading a lifestyle choice. Therefore the collective support of everyone is needed to change attitudes to reading and instil a passion for this critical skill.

The campaign calls on a various stakeholders to engage in an emerging reading culture. The Department aims to increase the average learner performance in Literacy/Language to 75% by the end of the campaign. In achieving this aim, the DoE is confident that in the long term, a culture of reading will be reflected in continuous activities in schools, homes, communities and businesses. DoE (2015b) advises that the RLC, was introduced with its main purpose as improving the reading capabilities of all South African children. The ultimate aim of the campaign is to guarantee that all learners are able to demonstrate age appropriate levels of reading by 2019.

As highlighted by the Minister of Education, South Africa doesn't have a reading culture, proven by statistics that only 14% of South Africans read and only 5% of parents read to their children. As a result, the DBE has advised all schools that reading has to be done in every class for at least 30 minutes per week as a compulsory activity in all schools. In addition to reading done at schools, families, churches and communities are encouraged to reinforce the "DARC", (DOE, 2016) at home and at various community engagements, aiming at reading to become a daily routine for both children and parents. Minister Angie Motshekga reported that there was an overwhelming response to this project.

The School Libraries Campaign was also launched, and a business breakfast was held to mobilise the different private and public sectors to partner with Department of Basic Education to make sure that all libraries have the mandatory reading materials to make them both sustainable and accessible. To this end, the DBE has initiated the formation of Reading Clubs, Spelling Bee Projects as well as Book Flood Campaigns countrywide.

2.7.4 Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS)

Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS is a phonics programme that has been designed specifically for teaching 44 speech sounds (phonemes) in spoken English and 120 key spellings (graphemes) in written English (www.thrassafrica.co.za). This programme moves away from the traditional 'one letter makes one sound' approach of teaching phonics. At an early stage, learners learn that letters make different sounds; e.g. ant, banana, ball. These words are presented on a chart and music is provided to sing along with the sounds. Learners sing, read and learn at the same time.

The next section looks at various approaches that are used to teach reading in the South African context.

2.8. APPROACHES TO TEACHING READING

UNESCO (2004a) acknowledges the fact that there are various ways of acquiring and applying literacy in one's day-to-day life, for example, at home, school, workplace or anywhere in the community. This simply means there is no single technique or

approach that is uniquely valid and that fits all environments. Educational provision for young children should be all-inclusive, with the child at the apex of any curriculum. It is about teachers' understanding, inspiring and stimulating children's potential for learning.

Before a child starts reading there are a number of activities that need to be considered. One such activity is play. Teachers' involvement in children's play is of vital importance when communication involve "open questioning, shared and sustained thinking", (Reading Resources, 2017). Some of the activities highlighted by Fletcher (2008) include; 1. Take turns and share; 2. Know own name and age; 3. Be sensitive to others; 4. Join in group activities, e.g. when playing with sand; 5. Focus on one thing for a prolonged time; 6. Be independent; like completing a lego set or a puzzle. These activities are important in preparing children to read, for example, how a child concentrates and perseveres on an activity shows preparedness for reading readiness.

There are multiple approaches that teachers can utilise to teach reading and these include; language learning experience (LLEA), individualised reading, basal, basic reader/ reading approach, cyclic approach, eclectic approach, etcetera. These approaches are discussed next.

2.8.1 Language Learning Experience Approach (LLEA)

Language Learning Experience Approach (LLEA) to reading has been found to be a very effective way to introduce the beginner to literacy. It is highly recommended for remediation in reading and writing. LLEA deliberately attempts to develop reading skills through the child's own experiences as described by his/her own personal language. Hugo (2010, p.135) highlights that LLEA is a whole-word or whole-sentence approach. It gives learners an opportunity to "rehearse speaking before they read and write", which turns out to be of benefit to the South African classroom where English may be an additional language to a majority of the learners.

Diaz-Rico (2008, p.171) expresses the importance of learners presenting their personal narratives which are relevant and interesting in classrooms, as this puts them at ease when reading their own work and that of others. It helps a learner to be in control of his or her own work. As learners narrate news in a classroom, the teacher writes down the news and reads it with the class. This contributes to learners'

understanding that there is a connection “between written and spoken words”. The learners become interested in reading their own news and hence improve on their reading abilities. The aim of the LLEA is to determine the “language, knowledge and experience” of the learner as the basis for reading material (Gregory, 1996, p.100). Gordon (2007, p. 97) speaks of the four steps that are used in the LLEA strategy and these are experience, description, transcription and reading. Learners, through their exposure to a scenario or situation, explain their experience by describing how they felt and relate these to their classmates. They can also write these experiences and share with other learners in the classroom. This encourages reading, communication, listening and writing, hence it is part of enriching the language experience of learners in the classroom.

2.8.2 Individualised/ Independent Reading Approach

According to the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) Report, (2013, p. 38), “paired and independent reading provides learners with reading practice and reading for enjoyment”. This practice needs to be done frequently and regularly. This is best suited when the teacher is conducting guided reading. The Report argues that “independent reading” was “neglected” in many schools and this type of reading approach should be a key part of the “grade 2 reading instruction repertoire” (NEEDU, 2013, p. 38).

It is perhaps the best approach to reading as it caters for individualised reading. NEEDU (2013) points out that the ultimate goal of instruction is for all learners to acquire a level of independent reading. Each learner selects his or her own reading materials and reads independently at his or her own pace. These books can be simple fun books from the library or class readers. Learners are taught a simple method of selecting his or her own reading materials and read independently at their own pace. They are taught a simple method of selecting books appropriate to them. They read one or two pages to see if the book appeals to them. As they read, they keep track of unfamiliar words. If there are more than five unfamiliar words on a page, it could be the book is difficult for them. If there are no difficult words on the page, that book may be very easy and are encouraged to look or choose a slightly challenging book (Bodman and Franklin, 2013).

The teacher evaluates the child's individual reading and provides help and instruction when it is needed. Occasional group lessons on high frequency vocabulary on word recognition skills, and on comprehension skills and processes may be provided. Group sharing times are scheduled as well. The teacher asks a series of questions which help the learner to share his or her experience in reading a selected book. A number of questions can be used to help the teacher to assess the learner. It doesn't mean all the learners are asked the same questions. The dialogue enables the teacher to make a sensitive assessment of the learner's development in reading.

The individualised approach requires the availability of a wide range of books both in content and ability levels. It demands that the teacher be very familiar with a sequence of reading skills which he/she can teach as required by each learner. Having a wide range of effective teaching materials, helps teachers diversify their teaching methods. It is imperative that the teacher develops an efficient and effective record-keeping system (Sulliman, 2005; Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, 2014).

The greatest obstacle to individualised approach is large class sizes which makes preparation of individualised teaching materials and weekly reading conferences for each child very difficult time-wise. The availability of appropriate books is often a challenge.

2.8.3 Shared Reading Approach

The Shared Reading Approach is practised by most teachers due to various reasons that may include lack of resources within the school, incompetence or idleness of the teacher, encouragement of the whole class to participate as a group and mismanagement of time.

NEEDU Report (2013, p. 37) proclaims that in "shared reading" the teacher works with the whole class, using big book or reading materials with enlarged print for the whole class to view. These reading texts can be a combination of fiction and non-fiction texts and can be aimed at higher achievers. Some learners will present at a "listening stage" while others will begin to read, as all learners advance at varying levels in their cognitive development (Holt, 1983).

The shared reading helps the teacher in modelling shared writing. Comprehension questions can also be used from the texts. When learners read the same books

repetitively, leading to chorus reading, learners will memorize the sequence of the sentences and read them correctly without even looking at the book. This is one of the hindrances to effective reading.

2.8.4 The Group Guided Reading Approach

Learners are grouped in small groups of 6-10 according to their ability levels. They are given the same text to read under the instruction of the teacher. They will be given the opportunity to discuss the text with the other group members and the teacher. As they will be reading, the rest of the class can be given work to occupy them so that they will not disturb the other learners or the teacher. The teacher has to be creative to avoid noise and unnecessary disruptions (Berne & Degener, 2010). The teacher has to be careful in selecting the books; they can be thematic or integrated with the other subjects.

2.8.5 The Basal, Basic Reader or Reading Scheme Approach

The Basal, Basic Reader or Reading Scheme Approach is the most commonly used approach in Zimbabwe. Basal readers are a series of books of progressively greater difficulty through the grades. The learner's book is accompanied by a teacher's guide or resource book. The better developed teacher's guides outline a definite sequence of word recognition and comprehension skills and processes for each grade and suggest skills for each lesson. Teaching notes and guidance are provided (Jefferys, 2017).

Jefferys (2017) further explains that all learners read from the same reader or text. In some classrooms, children are grouped according to reading ability level. They receive instruction from a basal reader of a corresponding readability level. In such a case, it is a combination of the cyclic and the basal reader approach that is used. This approach has been used for a long time and is still in use with amazing results.

2.8.6 The Cyclic Approach

According to Wilson, Nabors, Berg, Simpson and Timme, (2012) the cyclic approach to reading may be regarded as a modification of the individualised approach. It may also make use of basal readers. Reading books are selected and learning materials produced to meet the abilities and needs of small groups rather than individuals. Various activities and learning stations are developed usually equal in number to the

number of reading groups. The groups 'cycle through' these activities during the course of the week.

Usually the learning stations and activities will include the following;

- A centre with games and activities for vocabulary development;
- A station with games and activities for development of word recognition skills;
- A station for practice of comprehension skills and processes;
- An area for silent reading;
- A station for oral reading;
- A place for small group conferences with the teacher.

Some teachers include a writing station as well. As in the individualised approach, there will be occasional large group instruction for high frequency vocabulary, skills teaching and sharing. The cyclic approach provides opportunity to meet individual needs through small group instruction. It requires an industrious teacher who will produce a wide variety of meaningful teaching materials which can taught, independently of the teacher, thus allowing the teacher to work with other small groups. Wilson, et al., (2012) notes a concern with using this approach as working with small groups are more effective than working with large groups.

2.8.7 The Phonetic Approach

The major instructional methods traditionally used to teach reading have been "*phonetic instruction*", (Rayner, et al. 2001, p. 31). NEEDU advocates the support of CAPS in teaching of phonics and advances that teaching phonemic awareness should continue throughout the FP and into the intermediate phase (Grades 4-6). This sort of activity should be integrated into the general reading instruction in class and should no longer dominate entire lessons. Therefore, there is need to look at the reading level of learners when preparing activities and tasks.

Dahl and Scharer (2000) indicate that phonics is an important cueing system that young learners use to make sense of written words, along with other kinds of information. Phonics is regarded as a "bottom-up" approach that requires the learner to identify individual letters first, followed by diagraphs and other multi-letter units before single words can be read. The relation between sounds and symbols in texts are of paramount importance. Wallace (2001) expresses the view that there is a strong

association between phonemic awareness, the ability to process words spontaneously and fast, and a learner's reading achievement. According to NEEDU (2013), phonemic awareness assists learners in recognising that speech consists of a sequence of sounds, and speech combines to make words. In CAPS, as indicated by NEEDU (2013, p. 59) the teaching of phonemic awareness should be done throughout the FP and into the intermediate phase

Rayner, et al., (2001, p. 32) emphasize that phonics instruction emphasize the "relationship between graphemes (printed letters) and phonemes (their associated sounds)". The grapheme-phoneme linking is complex, and critics of this approach have argued that this lack of perfect correspondence causes confusion for the beginning reader according to Rayner, et al., (2001).

NEEDU (2013) recognises the use of phonics in teaching reading as a relationship between the sounds of the language and its' spelling and is therefore regarded as an important tool in reading and writing.

2.8.8 The Look and Say Approach

Singh (2010) argues that most literature on how to teach reading identifies two popular methods to employ when teaching reading, "look and say" and the use of "phonetics". The "look and say" approach is sometimes referred to as the "whole language approach" that teaches children to read and recognise whole words. Rayner, et al. (2001, p. 31) identify the whole-word approach as the "look and say method". In "whole-word instruction", a "sight vocabulary of 50 to 100 words" is initially taught. Subsequent words are also learnt as whole words although not necessarily out of context. Jeffery (2017) explains that through repetition the child learns to recognise the look of a given word and associate it with a spoken word.

Jefferys (2017) reveals that this method was also heavily criticised in Rudolf Flesch's (1955) book "Why Johnny Can't Read" where he argues that the word method led to children developing limited reading vocabularies and this affects other reading materials not familiar to the learners, hence the reading ability of children is compromised.

In providing a criticism against any merits of using this method, Engelmann, Haddox and Bruner (2011) express the importance of mastering sounds before children are

exposed to words. They argue that English is a phonetic script that has to be taught properly using phonics and avoid learners memorising thousands and thousands of words by rote method to avoid not being able to interpret new words when encountered in reading.

2.8.9 The Whole Language Approach or Instruction

Rayner, et al., (2001) indicate whole language approach as an approach to teaching of reading that emphasizes meaning. In this approach the centre of importance is meaning rather than speech sounds. Children are first encouraged to recognise and “read” words by listening to how the teacher pronounces a word from a flashcard and then repeat after the teacher. The teacher expands from one word to the other to a set of words. Using a child’s small sight vocabulary, this approach is very useful as he/she extends the language use by adding new words in sentence construction.

2.8.10 Story Telling as an Approach

According to Tobin (2007, p. 53), “stories, (including myths and legends) and folktales were used to gain wisdom, knowledge, and culture over many decades”. The word “story” has its origins in the 13th century, and literally means “an account of incidents or events”. Stories may be “fictional narratives, shorter than novels, or recitals of real or imaginary happenings”. Singh (2009, p. 96) writes that “children love stories as they are stimulated by fantasy”. Stories typically possess a setting, a cast of characters and a plot that resolves some sort of crisis. Tobin (2007) indicates that “a story describes a sequence of actions and experiences undergone by a certain number of people”. The author also states, “stories may also be very brief, presented by way of an anecdote which is usually a short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident”. The use of stories through storytelling is a valued knowledge sharing exercise. It is part of the general learning ethos and is easy to adapt to knowledge sharing objectives. Stories can be used very successfully as “instructional support systems” helping people learn to solve problems. Humans appear to have an instinctive ability and inclination to organise and represent their experiences in the form of stories (Jonassen, 2004).

Singh (2010, p.27) goes on to say that storytelling helps arouse the interest of reading in the learners as they become motivated to read on their own. Buchorn-Stoll (2002) in support of the idea says that as children begin to write, they can write their own

stories and read them to each other or the class. The writer has tried this with the Grade 1 learners by giving them a picture to discuss as a class, then allowing them to write five or more sentences about that picture. The learners become excited to realise they can write something about the picture, that which can be understood by the teacher and their peers.

Tobin (2007, p. 55) highlights the benefits of storytelling, since telling stories are fun; its effective in sharing knowledge in diverse population; it enables people to understand things in meaningful and relevant ways; storytelling encourages broader understanding; enjoy widespread acceptance as a means of communication; makes communicating messages simple and makes memorable messages.

Singh (2009, p. 27) agreeably says that storytelling can be used as a means through which reading can be taught very effectively, since it is able to capture the attention of young readers.

Storytellers can present stories using different techniques such as one-on-one, small-groups and large groups, (Tobin, 2007). Many different persons can assume the role of storytellers, which can be academics, guest speakers or one or more students. As suggested by Tobin (2007) the stories can be dramatized through role plays, with the learners/students from the class selected as actors.

Literature has indicated that children who regularly read become better readers. The question is “How can parents inculcate a culture of reading at home?” The following section explores this important area.

2.9. PROMOTING A CULTURE OF READING IN THE HOME, CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL

Reading readiness starts in the home. It is every parent and or caregiver’s duty to help a child prepare for reading for effective communication. Socialisation takes place early in the home, even before children formally start school, they are socialised into aspects of literacy from parents, their caregivers and significant others in their environment. A child learns language through interaction with caregivers and family. At the same time, a child who is exposed to a print-rich environment (Hunter, 2015), where parents or siblings always read books, magazines or even newspapers, he or she develops an

interest in reading. The more values, positive attitude, skills, knowledge and practices related to reading activities that children acquire indirectly or informally at home, the more strongly the influence will be on how prepared they are for reading.

Parents can support and encourage their children's interest in reading by reading simple stories and generating discussion about them by asking questions. Hohmann and Weitkart (1995) highlight that children's construction of knowledge comes from their "experiences" as they try to make "sense" of the world they are living in. As a result, children enjoy repetition, so if they ask for the story to be read again, they can read it again (many times) or role-play and or play games around the story.

Bronfenbrenner (1995) developed a conceptual model known as ecology of human development whereby he states that humans are a product of their interactions; be it biological, psychological, social or cultural. He divides the environments into 4 groups namely; microsystem (immediate family members, peers, school and community), mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. Parents or school leavers in the community, which are part of the microsystem, can play a significant role in their children learning to read. Hunter (2015) encourages parents to provide a reading enriched environment where trips to the local library can be arranged and reading books can be accessed to develop learners' interests in handling and reading different books or stories.

The home environment extends to the classroom and the school, where a culture of reading needs to be maintained.

Singh (2009) postulates that the "environment" within which initial reading is introduced and taught is crucial for the future growth of reading in young children. Hence classrooms in the Foundation Phase (Grades R to 3) need to be modified to accommodate diverse learners and promote reading. Lessing and Mahabeer (2007) conclude that sufficient stimuli should be provided in the classrooms in order for improved teaching and learning.

Wardle (2009, p. 369) supporting literacy development mentions that literacy has become a curricular focus of many childhood and elementary education programs in the world. He highlights an approach consisting of a combination of ideas and concepts from theorists like Dewey, Bruner, Emilia, Vygotsky and Piaget that support literacy development in various ways and these include (but not limited to), in-depth

discussion between teachers and students; discussion between students and parents; discussions among students; use of drawing and early writing to represent ideas; creating representations through writing, block building, making signs for a dramatic play, drawing plans; attempting to read project webs and reading signs, environmental print, books and pamphlets (and internet documents) to identify answers to questions.

The next section examines the factors affecting reading competence in primary schools.

2.10 FACTORS AFFECTING READING COMPETENCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

There are many reasons for learners' underperformance in reading and some are sometimes biological, genetic, behaviour-related, diverse cultural backgrounds or multilingualism as stated by Le Cordeur (2010). Tsoloakidis (2010) argues that socio-economic development, poverty, unemployment, inequality and poor education are contributing factors to poor reading performance in schools. Hugo (2011a, p. 267) considers other factors that contribute to learners' poor reading acquisition skills such as unmanageable classes, lack of reading materials, inadequate training of teachers and the level of their knowledge of reading methods and the language of learning and teaching. De Klerk (2002) deliberates on other contributing factors to poor reading to non-parental involvement and learners' socio-economic background.

Edern (2010, p. 3) contends that if "teachers do not comprehend" the curriculum framework, implementation of the curriculum will not be successful. Hugo (2011, p. 267) states that "one of the main factors in the process of mastering reading is the tuition provided by the classroom teacher and especially the Grade 1 teacher", where all formal learning begins. Nel and Muller (2010) in support of this point state that ineffective classroom instruction in the early primary grades is a major contributing factor to the high incidence of reading problems. This situation is very true in SA, where the majority of learners struggle to master the skill of reading in the Foundation Phase, where the fundamentals of how to read are taught. The researcher provides a summary of the reasons for the lack of reading competence in lower primary schools alluded to by Hugo, (2011a), Makeleni and Sethusha (2014), Pretorius and Spaull, (2016); Singh, (2009) and Spaull, (2016):

- Firstly, most FP teachers lack the skills required to teach reading in a systemic way and at pre- and in-service courses, teaching of this topic is disorganized, inadequate or sometimes non-existent.
- Secondly, this lack of expertise arises from poorly constructed basic/initial teacher training programmes.
- Thirdly, text-deprived environment-school monitoring survey showed that “half of schools in quintiles 1-3” have no school or classroom library or even a library corner in the classroom. Of extreme relevance here is that, research has shown that even when there are libraries, these are frequently misused or have inappropriate materials, which do not allow for reading advancement.
- Fourthly, another factor is inadequate resources to support reading (even if there are any, teachers often lack the knowledge and skill on how to use them effectively for the benefit of learners).
- Another factor is the compromised contact learning time. Less than half of the official curriculum time per subject is utilised and fewer than half of scheduled work is taught. Most teachers execute their teaching tasks just for the formality of teaching, allowing learners to backdate work simply for the benefit of having written records for line managers and district officials’ perusal.

Lastly, Makeleni and Sethusha (2014) make the point that factors that impede curriculum implementation are poor infrastructure and overcrowded classes. The learner numbers that teachers have to deal with in classes are ridiculously large, hence, attending to individual differences is not an option. Learners’ behaviour and lack of parental involvement make some goals impossible to achieve.

The next section focuses on support required by teachers for successful teaching of reading in schools.

2.11 SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

Fleisch (2008); Moalosi and Molwane (2010, p. 29) point to the dire need for proper training of teachers to capacitate them to implement the curriculum successfully. Mullis, Martin, Foy and Hooper in the PIRLS report, (2016, p. 240), indicate that

teachers do not spend much time on “professional development” related to reading. The authors further state that a positive attitude towards “reading and high achievement are closely related”, and in a “bidirectional way”. Ngware, Abuya, Mutisya and Oketch, (2010) note that the successful planned in-service training in Malawi and Madagascar was through “carefully planned programmes”. In agreement, Meerah, Halim, Rahman, Abdullah, Harun, Hassan and Ismail, (2010) cite that to ensure the effective implementation of curriculum, teachers need to be well trained, highly motivated and professionally competent. Spaul (2016, p. 3) offers the following suggestions to provide South Africa a solution to the current situation, a summary is provided below:

Firstly, decide on how existing and prospective teachers will be capacitated with knowledge and skill on how to teach reading, keeping in mind the diverse needs of the country’s learner population. Secondly, ensure that a bare minimum number of books are available at all primary schools, and these books need to be managed effectively. Lastly, monitor how teachers are actually teaching and introduce meaningful training programmes with strict monitoring of those teachers who are not teaching. Although Spaul (2016) offers some good suggestions, the practical implementation thereof ultimately lies with teachers and school management teams in the school.

2.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined literature pertinent to the teaching and assessing of reading. The researcher focussed on the definition of reading, its importance to education and also explored how reading is conducted in few countries in the African continent. The various initiatives to promote literacy in South Africa were also examined followed by approaches to teaching reading. The importance of creating a conducive home, classroom and school environment that promotes reading was discussed next, with factors that affect reading competence. The need to support teachers concludes this chapter.

Chapter 3, the next chapter provides a detailed description of the research design and methodology employed in this investigation.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provided the framework for this study by presenting an interrogation of literature pertaining to reading, highlighting the importance of teaching reading skills early to children in preparation for reading and writing. Other areas explored in chapter 2 were, initiatives and programmes used to teach reading; approaches to teaching reading; promoting a culture of reading in the classrooms and school and supporting and capacitating teachers in their endeavours to teach reading successfully to Grade 2 learners.

This chapter describes the use of a qualitative research paradigm in order to explore the following research question: “How do teachers teach and assess reading in the home language in Grade 2 at two public schools in the Gauteng Province”. The methods the researcher used to collect data, sampling and data analysis are discussed. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the methods employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (1996) describes research design as a series of guidelines to address research problems in an investigation. In this study, a generic qualitative research design is adopted. According to Creswell (2009, p. xxii), a qualitative enquiry employs “different philosophical assumptions, strategies of enquiry, methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation”. It aims at an in-depth understanding and explanation of what the phenomenon under investigation is about (Henning, van Rensburg and Smit, 2004, p. 3). Pertaining to this study, the researcher aimed to elicit an in-depth understanding of how teachers teach and assess reading at Grade 2 level in order to identify and address challenges that they may encounter.

Moreover, the study can be described as a “generic qualitative study” as it simply seeks to explore, explain or describe a phenomenon (Caelli, Ray and Mill 2003; Marshall and Rossman, 2016) and “is not guided by an explicit or established set of

philosophical assumptions in the form of one of the known (or more established) qualitative methodologies” (Caelli et al., 2003, p. 4). A generic qualitative study, also referred to as a basic qualitative study, is underpinned by the following characteristics namely; that the researcher is the main instrument of data collection and analysis; the findings are presented as rich, thick descriptions; and the research takes on an inductive orientation to analyse the findings (Litchman, 2013). In this study, the researcher was involved in collecting, analysing and presenting the data in the form of thick descriptions complemented with ample empirical evidence.

As this research is conducted through the perspectives and understandings of Grade 2 teachers and not through that of the researcher’s, this research can be described as being conducted from an ‘emic’ perspective. According to Babbie and Mouton (2008) an emic perspective is when the researcher seeks to study human action and understandings in their natural setting, from the perspective of research participants. The researcher worked within a public school setting with qualified, experienced teachers who were working with grade 2 learners. The researcher entered the site having an assumption that these teachers would have similar or different experiences which might help her understand what really takes place in the foundation phase (FP) classroom pertaining to how teachers teach and assess reading.

3.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is framed by Engeström’s (2001), “third-generation activity theory”, called cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). CHAT, initially developed by Vygotsky, and further developed by Leont’ev, was then expanded by Engeström as the third generation of activity theory. Here, “understand(ing) dialogue, multiple perspectives, and networks of interacting activity” became the focus (Engeström, 2001). Thus, collaborative activity and practice and not individual activity became the unit of analysis.

Engeström (2001) uses five principles to describe the activity theory. The first principle emphasises the “primary unit of analysis” as a collective, artefact-mediated and object-oriented. Individual and group actions were therefore interpreted against the entire system and not viewed in isolation. The second principle is that of the “multiple points of view of activity systems”. This lends itself to the divisions of labour amongst the

various participants. There is generally conflict that arises due to diverse histories and interpretations on how the rules in the system need to be applied. Next is the principle of “historicity”. The activity system can only be understood against its own history which may have evolved over time. The fourth principle is the “role of contradictions as sources of change”. These represent the tensions that may arise within the activity system. The fifth principle is the possibility of “expansive transformation” that arises from conflict. When established ways of practice is questioned, it could result in deliberate efforts to change or improve upon current practices.

The following diagram shows different elements of the activity system.

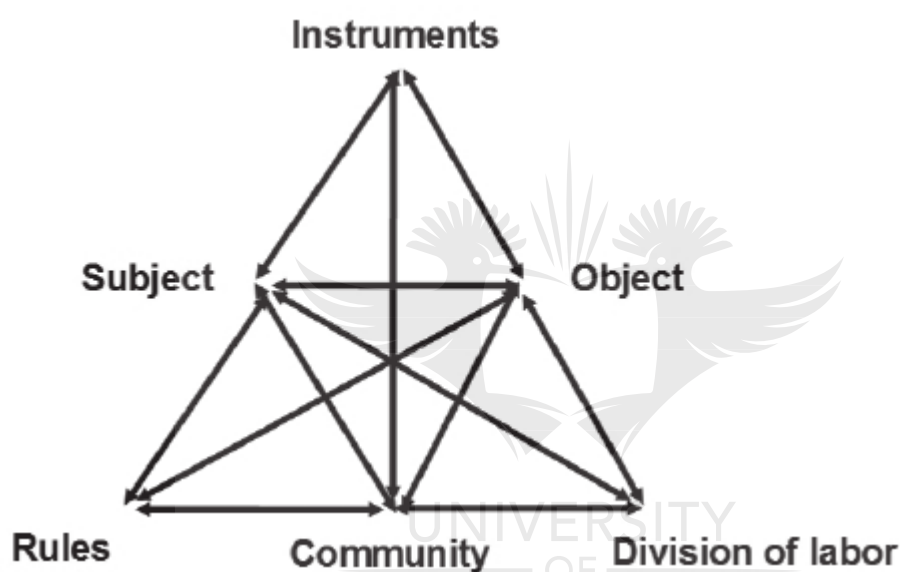


Figure 3.1 Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Source: (Engeström, 1987)

In the above diagram, the activity system is represented as a triangle showing the interconnections between six elements, namely the subject, object, instruments, rules, community and the division of labour. In discussing each element, I refer to Engeström (1987).

The subject is defined as the individual/s involved in the central activity (Engeström, 1987). In this research, the subject are the Grade 2 teachers. The object is who the activity is directed towards, which are the Grade 2 learners to achieve the outcome of improving their learning to read with understanding. The instrument refers to the tools used by the teacher and the community to achieve the outcome. These includes

resources such as the reading books, the CAPS curriculum, (DOE, 2002) and also the strategies employed by the Grade 2 teachers in teaching and assessing reading. The community refers to all the role players needed to achieve the outcome of the activity system. It includes the subject, which is the teacher, Grade 2 learners, the school management team, parents, and department officials.

The rules are the norms that are established that governs how the community is managed. In this research, the community is governed by both implicit and explicit rules. The implicit rules refers to those set by the teacher within the classroom. The explicit rules are those set by the department of education with regards to what needs to be assessed in reading, how it should be assessed and other curriculum protocols. The division of labour refers to how tasks and responsibilities are distributed amongst different individuals. In this activity system, the division of labour may be more horizontal with power relations from the department and school management on the teacher. These power relations could result in conflict or contradictions between the different components of the activity system, for example, between the subject (Grade 2 teachers) and the community, the division of labour and the rules. Contradictions could also take place between the teachers and the instruments. This is possible if a new teaching strategy is introduced that teachers may not be familiar with, resulting in tensions within the system.

The importance of the activity system in this study is that it enables me to analyse my findings with regards to how the different elements interact with one another and the resultant contradictions that may arise.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods refer to how data is collected and analysed (Efron and Ravid, 2013; Maree, 2011; Silverman, 2007). According to Roberts-Holmes (2014), research is about research methodology, approach and data collection methods and subsequent analysis of the data. The researcher describes the methods that she has taken into consideration when selecting participants, collecting and analysing data in the section that follows.

Yin (1994) highlight the importance of conducting a qualitative study in a natural setting as it provides a non-threatening environment that will enable the researcher to make sense of the meanings attached from perspectives of the research participants. The researcher conducted the research in two public schools in Gauteng in which the participants teach. The teachers were most comfortable in this setting as it was their place of work.

3.4.1 Research Sample

As data collected in qualitative research helps shape, revise and refine the investigation throughout the process, (Efron and Ravid, 2013), it is important that data is collected from a sample that would best answer the research question. To answer my research question: “How do teachers teach and assess reading in the home language in Grade 2?” there was a need to look at experienced and knowledgeable individuals who were currently involved in teaching reading at a grade 2 level. As explained by Creswell (2008), a qualitative researcher needs to identify the participants based on places and people that can best help us understand the research problem. This is referred to as purposive sampling.

In this study, four grade two teachers with five or more years of experience teaching in Grade two, were purposefully selected from two public schools in the Gauteng Province (GP). In so doing, the researcher was able to elicit an in-depth understanding from teachers in the practice on their experiences with the teaching and assessment of reading at Grade 2 classrooms. Grade two teachers were purposefully selected because the researcher is of the opinion that elementary mastering of reading was concluded in Grade one, as per the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) (DoE, 2011a) and (DoE, 2011b). In grade 2, the curriculum on reading expects learners to be able to master vowels, phonetics, common consonants diagraphs, consonants blends, alphabet names and sounds; build words using sounds learnt; sight words; and reading simple sentences, texts and short stories to improve their understanding and comprehension skills towards becoming independent readers (DoE, 2011a).

Participants	Grade	Years of experience	School
Teacher 1	Grade 2	+20	A Primary
Teacher 2	Grade 2	5	A Primary
Teacher 3	Grade 2	+10	B Primary
Teacher 4	Grade 2	7	B Primary

Table 3.1 Demographic Background of Participants

3.4.2 Data Collection

According to Creswell (2008, p. 178), it is important to identify data collection methods that are most suitable for qualitative researchers to address the research question. Qualitative researchers tend to rely on general interviews and observations so as not to restrict participants' views (Creswell, 2008). In this study the researcher used interviews, document analysis and observations in order to gather sufficient data to answer the research question. The researcher therefore spent adequate time at the schools she intended to study from, to gather detailed information to establish the teaching and assessment of reading at Grade 2 level.

3.4.2.1 Observations in the four classrooms

According to Creswell (2008, p. 221) observation is the process of "gathering open-ended, first-hand information" by observing people and places at a research site. Similarly, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002, p. 305) assert that observational data are appealing to researchers as they afford the researcher the opportunity to "gather live data from situations" taking place in the moment. The advantages include the opportunity to record information as it occurs in a setting, to study actual behaviour and to study individuals who struggle to express their ideas verbally (Creswell, 2008). Cohen, et al., (2002) state that it enables researchers an opportunity to see things that may unconsciously be missed in interviews, things that participants may not freely talk about (opinions) in interviews and to access personal knowledge.

Creswell (2008, p. 223) suggests the following steps to follow when observing in a research setting, which the researcher followed during my observations at the two schools. The researcher summarises the steps below:

- The researcher selected the best research sites to assist her in understanding the central phenomena (teaching and assessment of reading);
- She eased into the site gradually by looking around, getting a general sense of the research site and taking limited notes;
- She identified who or what to observe, when to observe and how long to observe;
- The researcher determined her role as an observer;
- Conducted multiple observations over time to obtain the best understanding of the site and the individuals;
- Designed some 'field notes'. Field notes are text (words) recorded by the researcher during an observation in a qualitative study;
- Considered which information she would record during an observation (physical settings like activities);
- Recorded descriptive field notes (events, activities and people; e.g. what happened) and reflective field notes (personal thoughts and insights, hunches, or broad ideas or themes that emerge during the observations);
- The researcher made herself known, but remained unobtrusive (introduced herself as she was an outsider and new to the setting/people and
- After observing, gradually withdrew from the site. Thanked the participants and informed them of the use of the data and the availability of a summary of results when she completed the study.

The researcher spent sufficient time to familiarise herself with the context when collecting data. In the classroom the researcher observed two to three reading lessons. The researcher used structured observations to collect the data because she had to know exactly what she was looking for. Cohen, et al. (2002) indicate that a highly structured observation will know in advance what is being sought, whereas a semi-structured observation is far less clear on what is being sought. However, if the researcher opts for an unstructured observation, he/she may not have clear details about the topic, with only an idea of what is being observed (Bell, 2005).

The researcher observed and documented everything that the teachers did pertaining to the planning, teaching and assessment of reading. During qualitative observations, the researcher should look, listen, learn, ask, ponder and record her own observations

in a structured or semi-structured manner (Efron and Ravid, 2013, p. 87). It is therefore necessary that the researcher practices good listening skills and pays careful attention to visual detail (Creswell, 2008). More specifically, the researcher observed the strategies that the teacher used when teaching reading, phonics, look and say, whole word or whole sentence approaches etc. The way the teacher conducted reading was of great importance. Was it shared reading, group guided reading, paired and independent reading, phonic and phonemic awareness according to the CAPS document?

To reduce subjectivity, it was necessary to record observations in an objective manner by adhering to the observation schedule and recording exactly what was taking place as stated by Bell (2005). These observations also served as a foundation for the interview questions and can also complement and support the interviews (Efron and Ravid, 2013). During the observations, the researcher got an opportunity to interact with teachers and learners and this helped to create more questions for the interview process.

3.4.2.2 Individual Interviews

Interviewing are valuable sources of information, if conducted correctly, as it allows the researcher to interpret and understand the meaning of participants' answers to specific questions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2016). It is for this purpose that qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing (Babbie & Mouton, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe qualitative interviewing design as being flexible, iterative and continuous, rather than prepared in advance. To achieve the best results, the interviewee should never feel threatened in any way.

A qualitative interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants "general, open-ended questions and record their answers", (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). In this study, the researcher intended to conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews, with four teachers at 2 public schools in the Gauteng province (GP). Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection strategy that use predetermined but open ended questions (Efron and Ravid, 2013; Maree, 2011). The researcher asked open-ended questions to give participants the opportunity to freely express their experiences (Creswell, 2008) and challenges pertaining to the teaching and assessment of reading.

The techniques that the researcher employed to elicit more information from the participants were probes and follow-up questions (Babbie and Mouton, 2008). Face to face interviews also enabled the researcher to obtain a more in-depth understanding (Merriam, 1998) of how teachers teach and assess reading at Grade 2 level. She recorded both verbal and non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions and gestures as they provide valuable information in the meaning-making process (Wolfinger, 2002).

3.4.2.3 Document Analysis

Documents can help the researcher to acquire a deeper understanding of the research problem (Merriam, 1998) using a variety of documents such as personal journals, memos and letters (Efron & Ravid, 2013). In analysing documents, the data is often used as a means of triangulation to corroborate findings across different data sets (Bowen, 2009). In this research, document analysis was used to corroborate findings that emanate from interviews and observations.

The researcher analysed the following documents: the prescribed reading material, teacher's lesson plans, learners' workbooks, the CAPS document and the learner-teacher support material provided by the Department of Education. The information contained in these documents helped generate interview questions and also directed the researcher to observe specific situations (Bowen, 2009). The researcher also requested for DBE assessment tasks and school assessment task results as well as reading materials available, which included class story books, group, paired and individual texts and readers to see how reading was done in the classroom.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004, p.127) describes data analysis in qualitative research as "an ongoing, emerging and iterative or non-linear process". Creswell (2008) explains that in qualitative research, data is recorded as the study proceeds, unlike in quantitative research where there is a pre-established instrument to measure distinct variables.

The information gathered from lesson observations, one-on-one interviews and document analysis was analysed through content and thematic analysis, according to

Cresswell (2008). Cresswell (2004) highlights that in data analysis, data is inspected, cleaned, transformed and modelled to come out with important information, reach conclusions and support decision making. The researcher provides a detailed description of the findings in the next chapter on how codes, categories and themes were derived from the different data sources, namely interviews, observations and document analysis.

3.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

As a qualitative researcher, the aim should be to “produce valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (Merriam, 1998). Hammersley (1992, p. 67) refers to “reliability” as the “degree of consistency” with which cases “are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions”. Similarly, Merriam (1998) talks of reliability as the extent to which one’s findings can be replicated, meaning that if the same research tools are to be used, more or less the same results should be expected. The way in which evidence is captured in both data collection and data analysis procedures also points to whether the evidence is clear or reliable (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p. 146).

Silverman (2007) describes ‘validity’ as another name for ‘truth’. Hammersley (1990, p. 57) too describe validity as meaning the ‘truth’, interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers.

Maree (2011) indicates triangulation as a traditional measure to improve reliability and validity of research findings by engaging in multiple methods of data collection. The researcher was engaged in triangulation of data through the use of different data collection methods such as observations, interviews and document analysis.

To confirm emerging findings, she devoted adequate time collecting data in the field to ensure that the data was ‘saturated.’ For review purposes, the researcher worked with her supervisors to ensure congruency in emerging findings emanating from the raw data. An audit trail as highlighted by Lincoln & Guba (1985) was also followed whereby she kept a detailed account of how data was collected, how categories were derived and how she made decisions throughout the research. These included memos, reflections, questions that arose during observations, interviews and

document analysis. Finally, the researcher provided detailed descriptions of the findings with adequate evidence in the form of quotes to support the data.

3.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

Every effort was made to guarantee confidentiality and privacy of the research participants to promote their rights (Mouton, 1996). The researcher did not use any information that can lead to participants being identified. The researcher guaranteed that all data collected will be securely stored for no longer than 2 years.

The participants' identities were kept confidential throughout the research study and therefore pseudonyms were used. The researcher only shared the names with the supervisors who assisted her to complete her studies. The audio-taped interviews will be kept safely and will not be shared with anyone. Written permission to conduct this study was also obtained from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee of University of Johannesburg (UJ), school principals as well as the four participants.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter offered a detailed description of the theoretical framework, CHAT that was used to frame this study, as well the various data collection methods the researcher used when conducting the research in order to answer the research question: "how do teachers teach and assess reading in Grade 2 in two public schools?" The researcher also explained how the data was analysed and the measures undertaken when observing and interviewing teachers as well as analysing the documents that were collected to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. The chapter concluded by providing information on how ethical considerations were followed in this study.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, will focus on data analysis and interpretation of the results.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the research design and methodology that was employed in this empirical investigation. The overarching research question that informed this study was: How do teachers teach and assess reading in the home language in Grade 2? The chapter therefore examined how teachers teach and assess reading in the home language in Grade 2. In doing so, the researcher provided a detailed description of the data collection methods and the research instruments utilised in the study. The chapter also outlined briefly how the data was analysed and interpreted. The ethical measures, in keeping with the University of Johannesburg as well as Department of Education ethical compliance were explained.

This chapter provides a detailed description of the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the various data collection methods, namely, observations, documents analysis and the individual interviews with the four participants. The literature review conducted in chapter two and the data collected using the three collection methods formed the basis in informing, guiding and directing the analysis and interpretation of the data in this chapter.

In this chapter, the researcher also explains the processes used when coding and categorizing the data collected from observations, the document analysis and individual interviews conducted with the four participants at the two research sites. The chapter concludes with a detailed presentation of the themes derived from the analysis of the data.

4.2 ORGANISING THE DATA FOR ANALYSIS

The research process began with the identification and selection of two appropriate research sites; namely two public schools that share common characteristics, such as diverse learner and teacher population, similar poverty index, comparable resourcing and are formerly disadvantaged schools where English is the LOLT in the Gauteng Province (GP).

Two teachers who possessed more than five years of experience in Grade two were identified in each school. The literature review guided the interview schedule. A pilot study was conducted with two teachers who were not part of the main sample. A formal written request seeking their permission was sent to all participants. The process employed for the pilot study ensured that the capturing of the data was in line with the research questions and sub questions of the investigation. The final interview protocol appears as Addendum 7.1a.

As indicated in Chapter 3, data was generated in three ways; observations, document analysis and interviews. The initial data was collected through classroom observations and the analysis of documents used by Grade 2 teachers in the teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2. The data gathered from the observations informed the questions for the interviews. The first part of the interviews focused on the teachers' background. It helped the researcher to gather information regarding the teachers' specialization during their teacher training. Their experience in teaching Grade 2 was also determined. The researcher concludes this chapter by grouping similar codes derived from the observations, interviews and document analysis into categories and thereafter related categories into six broad themes.

4.2.1 Observations in the classrooms

Maree (2011) advises the importance of having a purpose to gather information using the observation technique. The researcher's aim was to understand how reading is taught and assessed in Grade 2. The researcher commenced first with her observations so that it enlightened her on the type of questions that she posed to the participants in the interviews. The participants and their learners were observed over a period of two days during contact time.

The researcher designed an observation schedule which assisted her to collect data on how reading was being taught and assessed in Grade 2. Areas that the researcher observed and noted (Maree, 2011) were the methods utilized and how reading was developed, teacher and learners' activities, the skills taught and learnt and the interaction between teacher and the learners. The researcher also focused on how the teacher differentiated activities for different ability learners (academically gifted and learners that need support). A sample of the observation instrument appears under as an Addendum 7.1b, Data Collection Instruments.

An example of an observation instrument used for observing the reading lesson is reflected in the Table 4. 1 below.

Research Study: The teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 at two public schools in Gauteng Province.		
School A		
Observations made by Researcher	Comments/Notes/Analysis of observations	
- Seating arrangement of learners	T1 - Learners seated at their desks initially and then proceeded to a carpet where group reading was done. Groups were called out one by one and they moved to the carpet. Very orderly and highly disciplined. T2 Learners sat at their desks throughout the lesson.	Teachers were in control of the lesson, clear explicit instructions given.
- Individual Reading or Group Reading	Individual and Group Class shared reading	
- Material that was used for Reading	Worksheet based on phonics repetition of phonics “th” sound. T1 - Worksheets – “Thelma and Theo”; T2 – Worksheets - Additional to DBE workbooks addressing theme.	
- Position of Teacher during lesson	Walked around throughout the class.	
- Did each learner have his/own reading material?	Yes	
- Type of reading material – book, card, chart, sentence strips etc.	Worksheets- Teacher gave children an opportunity to glance through the worksheets or the DBE book.	
- Were learners seated or standing?	Seated at their desks initially, but reading was done on a carpet – co-operative (group) learning in T1 class. Reading was done with learners seated at their desks.	
Commencement of reading		
- Pre Reading activities done for recap/reinforcement of what learners have done already, eg. Phonemic reinforcement using work-cards, chalkboard, chart, sentences.	T1 and T2 - Commenced lesson by: -recap on phonics covered to date, introduced new words in the story. -read worksheet “Theo and Thelma” together with the teacher after highlighting new words, “could” and “favorite”	

	<p>-Read the story and asked to color in the words with the “th” sounds</p> <p>Phonics repetition – “th” sound –written on chalkboard and work-cards, pointed to the chart displayed on the wall.</p> <p>Re-cap on previous phonetics taught.</p> <p>Actions done- put hand on chest and say out the sounds ‘th’ to tell the difference between soft and loud ‘th’.</p> <p>-Repetition of common words in the story.</p> <p>Asked learners opinion on what they think the story is about- picture reading. Asked learners to read the title/topic of the story.</p> <p>Asking learners at random. One learner was asked and didn’t respond- teacher tried to accommodate all.</p>
- How did the teacher assess what the learners knew? Any follow-up	<p>Used the questioning technique</p> <p>Emphasis given on new words- ‘could’ and ‘favorite’</p>
<p>- Observations of how the teacher started the actual reading activity.</p> <p>- If group reading was done, which learner commenced reading?</p>	<p>Referred to worksheet, left to right reading, pointing</p> <p>Whole group read together</p>
<p>- Did the teacher allow learners to read in a certain order?</p> <p>- Was random reading done, eg, any learner was asked to follow-on with reading?</p> <p>- What was the purpose of this type of reading sequence?</p> <p>Did the teacher switch from “in sequence” according to seating/standing order to random readers?</p> <p>- Did the teacher pause/stop learners who were reading for corrections, pronunciation, fluency etc.?</p>	<p>No, all learners read together.</p> <p>This was not done when it is a good way of determining if all learners are following and paying attention.</p> <p>No random reading was done in both classes.</p> <p>Not at all.</p> <p>The learners would have been picked randomly to read. Also different worksheet could have been used to cater for individual differences- considering the teacher researched this from the internet and uses the DBE book as skeleton. (Teacher resourceful)</p> <p>Teachers were very attentive, stopped for punctuation, pronunciation, fluency and demonstrated “good reading” by reading sections of the story.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did the teacher check for understanding of what was being read? - Did the teacher ask only the learner/s who read to respond to her question/s? 	<p>Questioning technique,</p> <p>Any learner was asked to provide an answer.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher engagement and interaction during reading lesson 	<p>Active engagement but teacher lacked an enquiring approach to reading. She did not maintain a good flow as the learners read together. Researcher is not convinced that learners understood what they read.</p> <p>Teacher should encourage more learners to participate by involving them in individual reading while others follow the story in their own books.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learners engagement and interaction during reading lesson 	<p>Learners followed “sheepishly” as they read the whole worksheet.</p> <p>Not all learners participated.</p>
Post Reading Activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What follow –up activities were done? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal or written • Types of activities 	<p>Comprehension worksheet based on what was read. Learners proceeded to their desks to complete.</p> <p>Oral questions asked after the story. Learners proceeded to their desks to complete tasks.</p> <p>Learners asked to color the ‘th’ sound words from the worksheet. Different colours could have been used to differentiate the soft and loud ‘th’</p> <p>Learners who completed their work quickly, were allowed to visit the reading corner, choose books and read on their own.</p>
Final Comments	
Teachers informed researcher that comprehension is done every Friday, based on work that was done throughout the week.	
They try to do guided reading on a daily basis.	
The learners visit the school library once a week to borrow library books.	
Both schools have well- functioning libraries with ample resources catering for the different ability levels of the learners.	

Table 4.1 Sample of a completed Observation Schedule

4.2.2 Document Analysis

According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, (2004, p. 98) documents are like all texts open to discursive analysis. Their historical value is very important in analyzing data. In agreement, Maree (2011, p. 82) states that using document analysis as part of data gathering strategy is distinct from literature review that all researchers involve themselves in during research. The researcher requested for the documents that are used in teaching and assessment of reading. Participants provided personal documents, (Babbie & Mouton, 2008, p. 300), for example, their personal records (assessment), the CAPS documents, story books, journals, readers and other supplemental materials for reading such as worksheets, aba-cards etcetera. In research, Creswell (2009) refers to documents such as minutes of meetings and newsletters to the parents as public documents, participants were undeterred to share these documents. Creswell (2008, p. 238) emphasizes the need to maintain a critical eye on the documents that are analyzed for research purposes. The researcher took the opportunity to critically examine and reflect on these documents.

An example of the checklist used for document analysis is provided in Table 4.2



Research Study: The teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 at two public schools in Gauteng Province.

School A

CHECKLIST FOR DOCUMENTS

Available

1. Documents

Primary/Main documents

- CAPS documents- prescribed by the DOE for all public schools
- Lesson plans- from DOE document and individual teachers
- Lesson schedules- from the DOE and participating teachers
- Readers- individual, paired, group and class readers
- DBE Blue books supplied by DOE
- Workbooks- a learner's English book from each participating teacher for quality and quantity of activities

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Other documents

- Flashcards/Phonic cards/alphabet cards- created by teachers to support words and themes of the week
- Sentence strips- to reinforce words and themes of the week, used for incidental reading in class
- Word cards- may be guided by pictures to help master the words; Aba cards- used to help build sentences as individuals, in pairs, groups or at whole class level.
- Story books- may be big books or small story books.
- Themes as per schedule and lesson plans
- Library- books to support learning, Reading charts- reading and instructional charts, Sight words- on cards and or on chalkboard to reinforce reading.

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Participants indicated the following during their engagement with the researcher.

Teachers supplement DBE reading resources with additional information. Lesson plans are provided by the DoE as a guideline on what needs to be accomplished in reading. The teacher is advised to make own lesson plans by adding relevant information. Teacher's duty to adapt work schedules using themes to suit context of school. Reading cards are prepared by the teacher to monitor progress of the learners with a section for parent/guardian to sign on and comment. Availability of resources in the school allows the teacher to use different ways in conducting reading- individual, paired, group and class shared reading. Teacher prepares assessment schedules to help monitor learners' progress per theme. Learner visit the library. Awareness of Literacy/ theme based activities. Library books available according to learner's level of competence. Librarian has programs to monitor learners' progress. Different books and cards used at learners' levels. Alphabet charts displayed in the classroom for drilling of the alphabet sounds. Charts consisting of words with the vowels- a, e, i, o, u, blends bl-, cr-, -ng, -st, st- words etcetera were displayed on the classroom walls. Simple sentences used as reinforcement on work covered in class are on display. Sight words and high frequency cards available to help learners use them to make sentences and read more often. Words of the week on display for the entire week on the chalkboard. Learners have a chance to take a book of own choice and read after completing their class work. The teacher makes sure they don't always take the same book to read every time. Learners can make own words using single and blend cards. They read sentences on display and can make own sentences using aba cards provided in the class. More than one sentence can be created using a word forming simple paragraphs. Learners read different sentences that are short and lengthy stories. Learners' comprehension activities are given per group according to their level. If incomplete, learners can take the work home to do as homework with parental monitoring. Progress charts well monitored. Learners keep the cards in their files. Teacher signs the cards regularly then they are sent to the principal on a monthly basis for rewards to motivate the learners.

Table 4.2: Sample of Checklist for Document Analysis

4.2.3 Interviews

The teachers were interviewed after the researcher observed them teaching reading in their classrooms. The reasons were two-fold. Firstly, during the classroom observations, the researcher noted questions which were explored further in the interviews so as to get clarity and understanding on the reasons behind specific teaching actions in the classroom. Secondly, the researcher wanted to ensure consistency between observations in the classroom, measure of authenticity in documents and teachers' responses during the interviews. Such triangulation of data strengthened the validity and reliability of the data collected.

Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004, p. 81) specifies that the principles relating to data acquired by means of interviewing also apply to observation. The researcher firstly introduced herself and requested teachers for their consent to be recorded using an audio recorder. Notes were taken during the interview in the event that the recording equipment failed (Creswell, 2009). The interviews took approximately 45 minutes each, conducted in a venue on the school premises. During the interview, the researcher observed closely the body language of teachers, such as their facial expressions, to assist her to probe for more information, (Creswell, 2008).

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim using the Tesch's method (cited in Creswell, 2009, p.186), ensuring that the responses transcribed were the exact responses obtained from the participants.

For reference purposes, the interviewees were named as follows: Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2), Teacher 3 (T3) and Teacher 4 (T4) respectively. The researcher referred to herself as ES. Each transcribed line was given a number (vertically) during the transcribing process for ease of referencing to the data. Organizing the data in this manner ensured that when quoting directly from the data, it made referencing workable, for example, T3 (Teacher 3 in line 87) said *“in Foundation Phase, children will adopt their teacher's attitude towards reading”*. In so doing, the researcher ensured that an audit trail of the data was carefully managed.

After transcribing the data, the data was read many times to get an understanding of the responses. The researcher also wrote memos and comments in the margin of the transcripts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The transcriptions were then divided into units of meaning by inserting a “forward slash (/)” between segments (Henning et al., 2004). Thereafter, coding began by using common words or phrases to capture the essence of each unit of meaning. The researcher stayed as close as possible to the transcripts so as not to lose or alter the meaning from the interviews. For verification purposes, the services of two independent coders were utilised to ensure the credibility and authenticity of the transcribed data.

Figure 4.1 below is an example of how coding of data was executed. Similar codes were grouped into categories. Thus categories were named inductively as it emanated from the data.

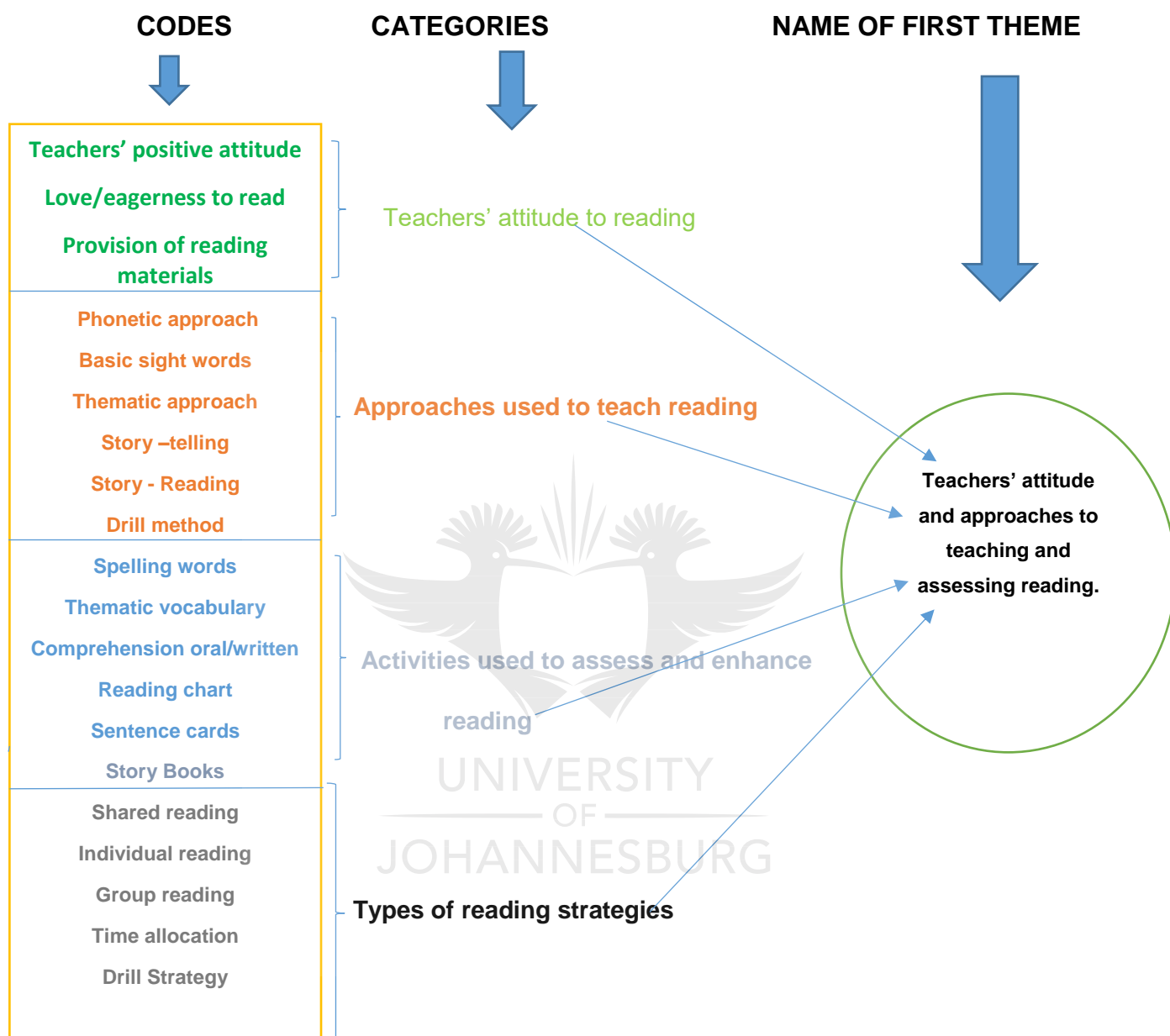


Figure 4.1: Sample of Data Analysis: Coding and Categorizing of data according to Tesch's method (Creswell, 2009)

After coding and categorizing of all the data obtained from the four interviews, six broad themes emerged and were named as follows:

- **Theme one:** Teachers' attitude and approaches to teaching and assessing reading.

- **Theme two:** Challenges experienced by Grade two teachers when teaching and assessing reading.
- **Theme Three:** The types of intervention required to enhance literacy levels in Foundation Phase education.
- **Theme Four:** The assessment of reading in Grade two.
- **Theme Five:** Teachers' perception of the resource materials supplied by the Department of Basic Education.
- **Theme Six:** The role of the School Based Support Team (SBST) and the School Assessment Team (SAT) in advancing reading in Grade 2 learners

The next session is a presentation of the six themes together with a discussion.

4.3 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THEMES

4.3.1 Theme one: Teachers' attitude and approaches to teaching and assessing reading.

The first theme that emerged from the data was "teachers' attitude and approach to teaching and assessing reading".

All four participants agreed that the "attitude and approach" of Foundation Phase (FP) teachers towards reading influences how learners approach reading. Strategies utilised by FP teachers serve as important avenues which determine the "love" for reading in learners. Teacher 3 (T3 L87) expressed that: *"in Foundation Phase, children will adopt their teacher's attitude towards reading."* Dewey (1997, p. 28) supports this view and believes that educational experiences must be both interesting and individually captivating, which will hence lead to future experiences and new learning. T3 emphasised the importance of teachers promoting reading and stated in lines 94-101 that, *"...in FP our learners really love reading. They even remind you... They just want to be part of reading. It boils back to theto the teacher; how am I promoting reading? When you as a teacher, are not promoting reading, learners will never be able to read. So it....back to the teacher."* T4 in agreement said in line 183-186; *"...my children are so willing to read. They go to the extent that they challenge me to say; teacher I have brought a book. I took it from my sister. I then say come forward and read to the class..."* T3 and T4 views echo Lutrin and Pincus's (2007) claims that

“reading is addictive.” Once children enjoy reading, they should have a variety of books to choose from to read and this will encourage them to read.

Teachers were in agreement that learning to read was important for children's learning in other subjects. Excerpts from the data that support this view are:

“I think reading is the main thing in our education system because if a learner can read at an early age, by the time they get to Grades 4,5,6,7...they understand natural Science, they will be able to read Social Science, they will be able to read Mathematics because there are a lot of instructions” (T1: lines 121-129).

Other participants shared this view. Examples include: *“...for me reading is basically that it opens our brains. If you can't read, you are not even...you can't get information except that you are going to be told. But when you read, you open your own path” (T2: lines 31-34); “if a child can't read he/she is unable to read the instructions and in maths.....if the child can't understand that instruction, he/she will get that sum wrong because of reading problem. But if we can deal with reading, I think we can overcome it (T1: lines 127 -129).*” They also acknowledged that the source of the problem for learners who struggle to read when they enter the intermediate, senior or FET phase of their schooling, can be traced to the foundation phase. For example, T3 accepted the blame that if a child struggles to read at upper grades, the focus should go back to FP on how the learner progressed, as expressed in the following excerpt:

“you know what, I am a FP teacher and I love FP teaching but it bolts back to us FP teachers. If you don't teach those learners the components of reading, those learners will be doomed. The benchmark is clear; FP teachers teach learners how to read and IP (Intermediate Phase) teachers teach them to learn. After that they escalate” (T3: lines 263-266)

The researcher is in agreement with the participants, other subjects are easier to deal with when learners are able to read instructions. Montessori (1967) highlights that reading and writing are the medium through which children learn many other academic disciplines. Kahn (1995) is of the view that children's explorations and curiosity in learning new words extend into many other disciplines such as science and social studies. Learners will be able to read the specific **thematic vocabulary** for all subjects if they are able to read the elements of any carefully designed task or assessment.

In addition to developing a love for reading and its importance in succeeding in all other subjects, the approach/es used to teach reading in the foundation phase classroom was deemed equally important. The following teaching approaches were identified by the teachers. Firstly, all four teachers reached consensus on the use of the **phonetic approach or method** as fundamental to teaching of reading in their classrooms. This approach employed through the use of the twenty-six (26) letters taught using both sounds and names of the 26 alphabets in the English language. The learners thereafter progress to acquire skills in encoding and decoding sounds/alphabets, starting with the vowels, a, e, i, o, and u, for example, combining “a” and “t” – “at” as used in c-at, b-at and f –at; “et” as in b-et, m-et, g-et. From my observations in the classrooms, all four teachers began their reading lessons by reinforcing the previous phonics taught in the lesson using flascards or a chart (see page 96 for consonant chart display in the classroom).

Wardle (2009) asserts that children learn alphabets in the Montessori’s programme, using moveable alphabets which can be manipulated to form words. Learners learn letter-sound combinations using sandpaper letters, and they begin to use these phonetic relationships to write words, sentences and stories within the context of their daily classroom activities. Children learn to write and read together, in combination and, with each enhancing the other.

Berger (2009) states that children’s thinking is driven by perception, that is, how something looks, tastes, smells, feels or sounds. Silbert, Sweetwaters, Saadien-Raad and Brennan (2011) assert that, “phonics has been popular in classrooms for many years”. Others believe that learners should learn to sound out the letters of the alphabet before they are given a book to read. Therefore, it is crucial that alphabet sounds are well mastered for reading. T1 conceded in line 45, she uses the phonetic approach. In lines 187-188, she said she teaches reading by first introducing the sounds of the 26 alphabets; *‘the sound will help because I don’t want to teach the alphabet to avoid confusion when you introduce sounds’*. Merriam and Merriam (1982) define phonetics as the study and systematic classification of the sounds made in spoken utterance. The participants claimed that the use of the phonetics approach helps learners to identify the sounds and the names of the letters of the alphabet. If learners learn phonetics, it becomes easy to join two or more letters to form a word. When learning how to spell words, the use of the phonetic approach is vitally important.

Wong (2015), reporting on a study of how different teaching methods affect reading development, concluded that beginner readers, when focusing on letter-sound relationships instead of learning whole words, increases activity in areas of the brain best wired for reading. Wong's study on brain activity and neuroscience reinforces the importance of phonics in the foundation years of learning to read. The emphasis in this method of teaching should therefore be on the sounds within spoken words and the links between these sounds and letters rather than on memorising words.

T1 and T2 work as a team with other Grade two teachers in the school and their work is similar. Helping each other as a team contributes to assist struggling learners. In lines 106-109, T1 pointed at the strategies she uses when she discovers some learners have difficulty in reading. She stated that she uses "*aba cards*" which are "*letters like 't' or 'o'*" which she gives learners to build "*words*" on the board. During the classroom observations, the researcher witnessed a large selection of abacards being used by learners. The abacards were selected as per the theme dealt with during the reading lesson. All learners then read the words constructed on the board together. The learners also get the abacards "*from the school library*" according to T1.

T2 in line 42, explained how she uses the phonetic approach as a baseline to ascertain the level of competence when learners transit from Grade one to Grade two at the beginning of the year. She "*uses flashcards to see if they know their initial sounds*"; these are the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. In her classroom observations, a wide variety (colour-coded) flashcards were made available to the learners in the classrooms during the reading lessons. All teachers made use of flashcards, to introduce "new" words in the reading materials to enable learners to familiarise themselves to the content in the reading materials. The teacher also made reference to the consonant chart displayed on the wall. This served as a re-inforcement of the phonic blends taught during the lesson.

T3 in lines 39-41 pointed out that commencing with the teaching of phonetics is her main focus because if they don't understand the initial phonics and the letter blending of sounds etcetera, they will experience difficulty in reading. The NEEDU National Report (2013) indicated that the relationship between words, the sounds that the words make, and the spelling of the words are important in reading and writing.

T3 added “... we look at the material of teaching that phonics, of teaching those components that follow under reading. So we select our readers very carefully, in terms of them being graded so that all our learners will be able to learn. The participant also pointed out that identifying vocabulary relevant to Grade two assists learners improve their reading. The researcher noted that the participants displayed phonic charts on the walls of their classrooms. During the reading lessons, learners were asked to identify blends on the charts (see consonant chart on page 79).

According to T4, when learners successfully acquire the basic skill to **encode and decode sounds** and words through the phonetic approach, reading becomes easier. This is evident in Teacher 4 (T4) in lines 43-46, when she stated that;

“I write it (word) on the flashcards with bigger font and in separate sheets from the book. Then I type it and write it on another page. I break it down into sounds. What I think is most important for the learners to be able to read is to teach them sounds first; like the phonic sounds, how to sound the letters of the alphabet. So after we have done that I give them words that match the sounds”. (see notes on observation sheet on page 49, where researcher engages with the teacher/s.)

T3 in lines 38-43 concurred by pointing out how she prepares learners for reading,

“we basically believe in the components that promote reading: which will be looking into phonics, looking at vocabulary, looking into readers themselves. Our main focus is on the phonics itself because if learners do not understand phonics then they won’t be able to read. We look at the vocabulary itself. Then we look at the material of teaching that phonics, of teaching those components that follow under reading....”

It is clear that these experienced teachers value the phonetic approach to teaching reading as fundamental in teaching reading to Grade 2 learners. Their responses indicate the importance of using different elements within the phonetic approach to reach different learners bearing in mind that everyone doesn’t conceptualise information in the same way. This is supported by Wardle (2003) who confirms that learning theorists and early childhood experts reveal that children’s learning is much more effective when the content they are learning is made meaningful and based on each individual’s unique experiences.

The second teaching approach used by teachers in this study was the “**drilling strategy**” which they considered as complimentary to the phonetics approach of teaching reading. This strategy entails the constant repetition of phonetic sounds, words and sentences to create an awareness in learners. T1 and T4 concur that this strategy is important and enhances reading. They believe learners learn better through imitations and repetitions. T1 in line 63 said; *“they (learners) like it because sometimes you hear them talking alone when they are playing doing the same way that we were doing (in class). Maybe I was doing an action when I was teaching that word. They do the same way I was doing.* By using the “drill” strategy, which is constant repetition, learners benefit, in that they learn to imitate the teacher, as noted by T4 in line 47, she *“allows learners to repeat sounds and words”*. The “drill strategy” is corroborated by T1 and T4 as the phonic sound “th” was done repetitively by T1 during the reading lesson in School A (see Observation sheet on Page 49).

In addition to learning through repetition, T3 explained that it enables learners to apply the skill that they would have learnt to read other words (that is to assimilate). This aligns with the process that Piaget defines in his theory of cognitive development as taking in new information and changing it to fit in existing schemas.

A third approach to reading used by the participants is the use of the **Basic Sight words** applied to early reading instruction. This typically refers to the set of about one hundred words that continuously appear on almost any page of text, for example, who, the, he, were, does, their, me, be, etcetera. These words are used in everyday language. T1 in line 166 used the word “fibre” (her own informal classification) to describe the five vowels of the alphabet, (a, e, i, o, u) as she states that, *‘I think the first thing that I will do is to take the fibre words, ‘a e i o u’ just for them to recognise the letter.* The participant then asks the learners to write their own names. She says the learners have to start with words that are familiar like their names, to help master the letters and vowels that are in their names. This response suggests that T1 is aware of individual differences. Some learners would have progressed to Grade 2 without knowing how to spell their names. T1 claimed that a large percentage of learners who cannot read don’t know how to write their names but can only copy them. It is the teacher’s duty to create a conducive learning environment; an environment that stimulates learning and active participation from the learners, bearing in mind that they are all different. Montessori (1949) and Froebel (2004) believe in creating specific

educational materials for young children. The authors write about teachers providing reading materials that are familiar, interesting and appealing to young learners in primary schools.

Another approach, as indicated by T1 and T2, is the use of the **thematic approach**. The thematic approach involves an integration of content across different subjects. Both teachers corroborated the use of this approach in their classroom teaching, as T1 in lines 45-57 explained how all lessons (of different subjects) are integrated according to the theme explored for the week/s. The researcher also observed the thematic approach being practiced in the classrooms. Teachers chose words/phrases etc from the DBE books and learners learn how to read and spell those words. They read the words every day and do different activities like word making, counting, word matching and sentence construction. This approach helps to improve mastery of the words, word formation and in spelling, an assessment which normally takes place on a Friday. The teachers gives learners homework every Monday to work throughout the week in preparation for the assessment on Fridays.

Lastly, **storytelling** was viewed as an important approach to teaching reading as it stimulated creativity and imagination. T2 preferred **storytelling** as another way of improving vocabulary. In lines 74-75 she stated that; *"I think I do reading every day. Even if I do not do shared reading, I always tell a story at the end of the day."* She claimed reading calms the learners and before the story is read, learners are asked to read the words or talk about the pictures in the story. This helps in prediction of the story because they would have identified the main ideas of the story. When learners are shown pictures to assist them to make sentences, they enjoy participating, as they are included in the formation and the end result. This improves their creativity, word building and sentence construction. Silbert et al., (2011) advocates that learners be given a story to read before they learn to sound out letters. Therafter, any letters the learners focus on should be taken from the familiar words from the story. This is necessary in English because the language is complicated e.g. the sound 'a' doesn't always sound the same; like "a" in cat, "a" in cake, "a" in call, and "a" in car. Here, one letter represents four different vowel sounds. Mac Naughton and Williams (2009, p. 217) identify **story-telling** as a very special form of telling children about things and it is very different from **story-reading**. They state that **story-telling** depends on the spoken word to connect a story-teller and listener so that a story is created in the

imagination. The authors state that **story-reading** focuses on print (words and or illustrations) for the understanding and appreciation of a story. T2 in line 149 doesn't really know what motivates her to teach reading but she knows she loves reading stories to her learners. Through stories she is able to determine if learners have understood and were able to comprehend the story by answering the questions. If she were to rate her class in terms of reading, she takes into account that her children are of varying reading abilities; ranging from poor, average, good and excellent readers in order to progress to Grade 3.

The researcher observed that the teachers use a combination of the above approaches in their teaching of reading. This strategy is supported by Dewey (1938), who states that the approaches and strategies that the teachers use are vitally important as there is no single approach or method that can be used to teach all learners to read. Therefore, the use of a multitude of approaches and strategies are crucial in teaching learners how to read. Through combining different approaches, helped the teachers to differentiate between different ability levels of learners. For example, T2, in addition to doing shared reading, read them a story at the end of the day. She was of the opinion, in line 79, that reading calms/settles the learners and it helps improve their vocabulary. In line 108 T2 said, *"in my class, I do group reading which is usually according to the level. The levels enable me to give them books according to their abilities. And I also allow them to read as a group. I also allow them to read as peers. We also read as a class, which is shared reading"*. T3 explained (line 108) how reading is done in her class. She divides her learners in groups according to their ability levels in reading. She focusses her attention on all learners with their individual differences in reading, whether academically privileged, medium or academically challenged readers. More attention is given to the struggling learners to help them master reading whilst others are occupied with different tasks to avoid unnecessary disruptions in the class. T3 concentrated on those learners with reading difficulties, as not mastering the fundamentals in reading will have a lasting effect on learners' inability to read fluently at the next levels, namely the intermediate phase and senior phase.

What was evident is teachers resourcefulness in making their own teaching resources to assist children in learning to read. For example, T1, T2 and T4 used flashcards or aba cards to facilitate the teaching of reading. T2 in line 47 uses flashcards and simple

books to determine learner's levels when she receives them from grade 1. She then groups them according to ability. She claimed it works for her because she works with what she knows. Later in the year, in term 3, she stated in line 52-55: "... *that's where I pair those who are advanced to help those who are behind because they learn better through peer learning. It's much better. You take the stronger one and pair with the weaker one. It helps the weaker one*". What is clear is that teachers are making use of teaching aids, peer and individual learning to reach out to all ability levels. Gardner (1983) asserts that multiple intelligence theory reminds teachers that there are different types of learners in every class. It is the teacher's duty to reach out to each individual. The seven multiple intelligences include; logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intra-personal. Joanna Burden, an author with the British Council, (www.teachingenglish.org.uk) identified visual learners as the common type of learners. She stated that it is important to appeal to visual learners, as a high proportion of learners have this type of intelligence. The cards can be of different shapes and colours to capture children's attention. At the same time teachers should use the cards in different ways.

In addition to the different teaching approaches and teaching aids, a library corner in the class was viewed as an important way to stimulate and encourage children to take up independent reading. For example, the reading corner for T2 proved valuable as she allows learners to choose books (graded), see page 96 for picture of reading corner). According to research Silbert, et al., (2011) theorize that many children learn to read on their own by just being exposed to books from an early age. Children also learn by listening to stories and observing people around them reading and writing. Lutrín and Pincus (2007) too point out that reading starts at a tender age and grows as the reader is exposed to more reading materials or texts.

The main resource that guided what teachers taught and how they assessed reading was the CAPS document. This was evident by T3 (line 103) when she indicated that she does reading daily according to the notional hours determined by CAPS document. A copy of the CAPS document was available for the researcher's perusal in all 4 classes. Reading is conducted in all four classrooms from Monday to Friday for 30 minutes daily, totalling 2 hours 30 minutes a week. As a teacher of grade 2 and having been a head of department, T3 mentioned the importance of managing her own class in terms of adhering to the time allocation devoted to reading in order to

develop interest in tackling reading when she stated in lines 88-91 “...as a school we have tried to conscientize teachers in terms of managing their classrooms and in terms of adhering to the time allocation of reading with your learners, if you don’t promote reading as a teacher; your learners won’t be interested in reading.” As is evidenced by the data, strict adherence to the CAPS timeframes was adhered to.

Since reading is the foundation for all learning, the ability to teach learners to read assuredly rests with the Foundation Phase teacher. However, success in reading should not solely be measured by fluency with acceptable pronunciation. From a CHAT perspective, conflict arises between the subject (teachers) and the tools (teaching approaches). In this study, the teachers believe that they are using the correct approaches to teaching reading. However, the data points to teachers being steeped in oratorical reading (Rule & Land, 2017). They placed a lot of emphasis on decoding, pronunciation, fluency and oral reading. Limited references were made to determine learners understandings of the text or its links to their prior experiences to make learning more relevant. Teachers use visual teaching aids such as flash cards but the focus on meaning-making was on individual words in isolation. In shared reading or storytelling, the emphasis was also on reading without really engaging with the meaning of the text. Reading however is also about comprehension (Grabe, 2009; Pretorius, 2014). As contended by Spaul, Pretorius and Mohohlwane (2018, p. 2), by the time a learner completes Grade 3, they should be able to read “rapidly, accurately and with comprehension.” Thus the outcomes, from an activity system perspective, of children learning to read with meaning, is not being fully realised.

4.3.2 Theme two: Challenges experienced by Grade 2 teachers when teaching and assessing reading

The data highlighted several challenges to the teaching and assessment of reading. The first challenge relates to the home environment. Teachers raised concerns about some learners who live with grandparents who are illiterate; hence they cannot help them with homework. Some parents get home late from work and do not have the time to assist or monitor homework. T4 in lines 147-177 is concerned that homework is relative to some parents to the extent that she is discouraged to send homework home, even after explaining to the parents about how they can assist with homework. Another challenge experienced by teachers are parents, and even older siblings, who complete

the child's homework for them. T4 expressed her disappointment when she observes such actions as it negatively hinders the child's ability to work independently. T2 in line 183 has also expressed the lack of support and involvement of some parents in their children's learning:

"...the same children that do their work in class, will be the same children that do their homework at home. Not all the parents are involved. Even though you say it in the parents' meeting that they need to help their children but it's not all parents that will be supportive. But those who are supportive, you can see with their children as well."

T3 from lines 134-144 had this to say about parental involvement, *"yes, there will always be parents who do not cooperate. You can even see it when you get a report from them."* T3 added that some parents believe that their children are coping well at school, by stating that their child *"reads very well, but this child is not even reading."* Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) propose that humans are a product of their interactions that develop over a period of time. These include; biological, psychological, social and cultural. This applies to the child's learning. It all depends on the foundational support that one would have started on that helps in their later school life. It means that parents need to take responsibility over their child's learning. T3 (lines 145-149) expresses her views on parental involvement in their children's education. She encourages parents to *"reflect or state it clearly that your child is struggling"*, so that both teacher and parent are *"on the same page when it comes to retention issues"*. The teacher values *"assistance"* from parents for the betterment of the learners.

The child's microsystem (that includes family, peers, religion and community has an influence in the development and learning of the child (Ng and Yuen, 2015). Since the parent has a direct immediate impact on the learning of the child, it's important that they are involved.

A lack of encouragement and support from home has been cited by the research participants as one of the reasons that children do not achieve at school. According to T2, when she identifies a learner with learning difficulties and communicates to parents, the learner's work improves if they begin supporting and helping the child. T1 in lines 80-84 says; *"Some give their children support because if you give a child work*

and say go and do this at home, cut out pictures". When this work is done, the teacher will notice the difference in the child's work in class.

Parental attitudes towards reading has also been cited in the data as having an influence on how children learn to read at school. T3 in line 88 stated that, *"children will adopt their parents' attitude towards reading."* Anecdotal evidence suggests that when children grow up in an environment where parents constantly show an interest in books, print material etcetera, their children will develop positive attitudes towards reading. for example, if one or both parents read the daily newspaper, read from the electronic devices or even when the mother constantly refers to a cooking book when preparing meals, the child will observe and develop an interest in reading. Lutrin and Pincus (2007) agree with the view that reading starts with the parent reading to a child. Parents play a critical role in children becoming literate according to Clymer, Toso, Grinder and Sauder, (2017). A study by Scarborough, Dobrich, and Hager (1991) found that children who were read to at home became better readers by the time they reached Grade 2. In fact, parents who read daily to their children and listened to their children read saw improvements in their vocabulary, receptive language abilities, and overall improved reading scores at school (Evans, Shaw & Bell, 2000). Parents form part of the community in the activity system. Conflict arises between the community and the division of labour between different individuals within the system (Engeström, 1987). Unfortunately, due to the socio-economic conditions at home, parents are forced to work longer hours and are thus unable to assist their children in their learning to read. Moreover, children spending time with caregivers who themselves cannot read results in teachers at school working harder to ensure that children reach the desired learning goals as set by the Department of Education in the CAPS document.

A second challenge is learning three (3) languages simultaneously. Examples from the data to support this view are: *"what I don't like is they are learning 3 languages at the same time. They are doing English as a Home Language (HL), they are doing Afrikaans as FAL (First Additional Language) and IsiZulu as SAL (Second Additional Language),"*(T1, lines 194-196). T3 in line 63, pointed out that the programmes the Department of Education intends to introduce to the school are not in the learners' home language (SiSotho and IsiZulu). In line 162, she said that learners are at different stages of reading. Some love reading and others don't. They struggle to encode and decode, to the extent that these learners withdraw when it's reading contact time. T3

was concerned since there are no programmes in the Home Language isiZulu and Sesotho being offered in her school. T3 moves on to state that a major challenge will be creating “time” to fit in new reading programmes in the Home Language isiZulu and Sesotho, since the CAPS document is too prescriptive. The researcher noted during observations that all four teachers focused on similar themes/topics/stories during the reading lesson. This is indicative of the extent to which the CAPS document/curriculum being prescriptive, giving credence to the utterances of the participants. Notably, the research sites were located in different geographical settings.

Children in these classes are not first-language English speakers. However, English is the language of teaching and learning at these schools. This is problematic, as argued by Koch, Landon, Jackson and Foli (2009, p. 95),

“There is a large body of research (in Africa – for example, Bamgbose, 2000; McDonald, 1990; and amongst other linguistic minorities [sic] internationally (Ramirez et al., 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2002) which shows that replacement of the mother tongue by a second or additional language by the start of schooling, or early transition to a second language as LoLT is not consistent with academic success, except where the mother tongue has high prestige or vitality in the so-called immersion programmes”.

The advantages of home language in the early grades is therefore important but hugely ignored.

A third challenge is the expectations from the Department of Education and their lack of awareness of what really happens in the classroom, as demonstrated by the following:

“it’s up there that it needs to be corrected. Now we need to start from the base because I think our leaders or the Minister of Education is not quite aware of exactly what happens in the class”“Sometimes there are learners who are so far ahead of the others that can really read anything. Sometimes you feel like you are boring them; the one that is ahead trying to read with the one that is still struggling” (T2, lines 28; 114-116).

According to T2, the CAPS curriculum document is too prescriptive, preventing teachers from allowing learners to move ahead with learners who display a high

cognitive level. Thus, another area of conflict arises between the subject (teachers), the community (the DoE and CAPS curriculum), and rules within the activity system. The rules are the norms that are established that governs how the community is managed. In this research, the community is governed by both implicit and explicit rules (Engeström, 1987). The implicit rules refers to those set by the teacher within the classroom. The explicit rules are those set by the DoE with regards to what needs to be assessed in reading, how it should be assessed and other curriculum protocols. Tension therefore arises between the implicit and the explicit rules. Not all learners learn at the same pace yet teachers need to ensure that they are adhering to the time-frames stipulated in CAPS. The result is that learners who are struggling will be left behind. On the other hand, learners who grasp new content easily will get bored, a view expressed by T2.

A fourth challenge is the teaching of reading in large classes and resultant classroom management issues that arises thereof. T1 faced disciplinary problems in her class. In lines 303-306, she expresses her frustrations when she is busy with group guided reading or individual reading and *“one child will stand up and do whatever he wants to do. Something that is out of what you are doing.”* This type of behaviour disrupts the reading lessons and the general tone of the class. In lines 308 -310, she added; *“haa, it’s so frustrating. Because you will think about the...you don’t do anything. You just get out and get air and come back. When my kids see me getting out they know that I am angry.”* She stands next to the class and they alert each other that the teacher is unhappy with their behaviour. T1 admitted that it’s not easy to manage large classes because some learners pretend not to hear you, resulting in sometimes involving the SMT (School Management Team) and parents to assist her in disciplining the learners.

Another example of classroom management, as explained by T1 (lines 323-332), is

“having one child bunking classes in Grade 2. He would ask me to go to the toilet....15 minutes go (later), when you go out looking for that child, you won’t find him....and much later he would, come back from the other side of the Grade 7 classes”

The researcher in this study has extensive knowledge and experience teaching grade 2 learners, and alludes to having observed the above type of behaviour amongst learners. She attributes this type of behaviour to frustration and their inability or

difficulty to read and thus resort to finding excuses to be out of the classroom. Such an observation is supported by T3 who indicates that different stages of reading brings along different types of behaviour. She mentions that some learners are very frustrated as they struggle to decode and identify letters. They therefore become inhibited and scared and also embarrassed to read in the presence of their peers.

Although the enforcement of classroom rules is an integral part of effective classroom management (Alter & Haydon, 2017), rules can sometimes become difficult to implement in large classes. The use of engaging teaching strategies can also become compromised when there is a shortage of space. For example, bringing children in small groups to the front of the class may be hindered due to limited space. Teachers may experience difficulty in monitoring the entire class under these circumstances.

Finally, lack of resources at schools impacts on the quality of teaching and learning. T3 in lines 233-235 is concerned with the way some schools are being managed in terms of the curriculum resources. She is of the opinion that lack of resources within a school can lead to teachers being demotivated in teaching reading. She says, “...*but when I think of schools, the issue of resources, if a principal is that type of a person who doesn't want to share (LTSM) Learning and Teaching Support Material allocation. It becomes very frustrating...*” for the teachers. Teachers then learn to share and strategize on how and when to use shared readers and other resources. Modisaotsile (2012) argues that shortage of learner-teacher support materials was still a problem in many South African schools, which impacted negatively on the quality of teaching and learning. From a CHAT perspective, the tools in the activity system, in this case, resources are sometimes lacking, impacting negatively on the outcomes of children learning to read.

4.3.3 Theme three: The types of intervention required to enhance literacy levels in Foundation Phase education.

Not all learners have the opportunity to learn in their home language. There is need to identify the learners' home language. Oral communication is very important in the FP to help identify such learners. Even though some may be using the LOLT at home, they may not be confident in using that language or communicate in front of the teacher or other children. Intervention is therefore needed. The intervention can be from the parent, the teacher and peers. According to Kidd (2011), recent studies show there is

a significant number of learners who need individualised instruction in the specific areas of reading and writing due to South Africa's poor literacy levels.

All four teachers reported that they do support learners. T3, as an experienced former HOD in the FP (in another school) and who now teaches grade two in the current school, ensures curriculum delivery by appropriate and proper procurement of teaching and learning material for all teachers in the phase. She stated that she looks at the development of teachers, by *“supporting them”* in executing their teaching lessons according to the framework of the CAPS.

Teachers also support one another. T1 from lines 38-43 highlighted that she appreciates and values the support she gets when planning together with her colleagues. She said,

“I get the support from the teachers that I am teaching Grade 2 with. What we do, we always have meetings on Thursday in the afternoon to plan for the next week. They will tell me today we are going to teach them ... they give us the words that they are going to read and sound and the hand writing for the week. This week we are introducing double sound; maybe it's 'o' or double 'e'. Then they give us the words that we are going to do the following week with the learners and how they sound”

It is obvious that this collaboration among the teachers teaching in the same grade is highly beneficial.

To reinforce what was taught in class and to support learners in inculcating a love for reading, all four teachers set additional work to be completed at home with the assistance of parents. This occurs from Monday through to Thursday. All participants have the same view when it comes to parental support, *“not all parents are cooperative”*. However, T3, in line 124, stated that they are looking for ways to involve parents more into their children's learning. LaBahn (1995) describes parental involvement as a combination of commitment and active participation of the parent to the school and to the child. Schulman, Black and Ewen (1999) explain that although most of the state preschool programs call for parental involvement, parents are not full partners in many schools. To try and involve parents to a greater extent, T3 mentioned that they are creating cards whereby a teacher demarcates what to help the child with in terms of reading. For example, the parents listen to the child read and sign the card.

They will encourage the parents to listen to their children for at least five minutes a day bearing in mind that parents are also leading busy lives. The teacher will then listen to the child again for both parent and teacher to be on par. This helps when it comes to the end of the year, especially when the teacher needs to retain the child. If communication lines between the parent and the school is open throughout the year, parents will be aware of the child's progress. LaBahn (1995) goes on further to explain that the concept of parental involvement is a vital one and can produce great rewards for all concerned. Parents need to be encouraged to buy books instead of technological devices to support learners' reading.

Another area identified as a useful form of intervention is the type of reading materials selected for differentiated learning. T3 highlighted the learner support materials/resources as useful in supporting reading among Grade 2s. In lines 38-43 she spoke specifically about the support they provide as a school;

"We basically believe in the components that promote reading. We will be looking into phonics (phonetics), vocabulary, and the readers themselves. Our main focus is on the phonics itself because if learners don't understand phonics, they won't be able to read. We look at the vocabulary itself. Then we look at the material of teaching those components that follow under reading. So we select our readers very carefully, in terms of them being graded so that our learners will be able to learn"

School B is currently looking at a software that supports reading. T3 stated,

"So what we are doing as a school currently is looking at software which is called 'Readers are Leaders'. We are going to implement that as from next year when our learners will go to the lab (laboratory), do reading and the software itself will upgrade them and tell them if they are at the correct level. But we are not neglecting the responsibilities of teachers teaching phonics because the components of reading within the phonics part are very critical at FP level".

T3 continued to state, *"we also have a programme which is called 'Letter land', other schools use 'THRASS'. We didn't have enough money to buy THRASS because it's quite expensive. The teachers who are trained on letter land ... will also educate these other teachers in terms of correct pronunciation; as you know that English is not our Home Language (HL)."*

T3 reported that the software won't lead to the neglecting of teachers' duties. The school will take advantage of the teachers who know letter land to conduct a workshop to capacitate others and avoid costs and help improve on pronunciation and mastering of English.

In the classroom, T1, T2 and T4 agreed that one-on-one support is needed as every learner's needs are different. T4 uses a series of books to support reading at different levels; T2 gives challenging personal books from the storeroom and T1 occupies others with challenging work to keep them purposefully engaged. As the more fluent readers are busy with independent reading, the teacher gives one-on-one support to the academically challenged ones.

Students who are able to read independently are developed further by additional programmes. T1, in lines 140-1 highlighted that;

"Those who can read, there is a programme here at the school library for the whole school, from Grade R to Grade 7. We have a timetable for each class to go to the library for 30 minutes. In the library they have levels for Grade R, grade 1 and Grade 2. They give them a file. In the files they are having words that they read. Those words, they read them in the library for 30 minutes. For my class, they go there every Monday and Tuesday. Meaning that for every week, they have one hour for the library."

The idea that the teachers understand the differences within individuals gives hope in the improvement of literacy results and education in general since it is well known that South African education is not favourable, globally.

In line 118, T2 accommodates learners with different ability levels when she stated that she doesn't neglect the academically advanced or privileged learners. She supports them by giving them more challenging work. She mentioned that she has personal small books that she buys from CNA. She keeps the books in the classroom library or the storeroom. The presence of a reading corner was indicative of this initiative by the teacher. When learners had completed their activity, they were allowed to go to the reading corner and choose a book and read on their own. She then challenges them to narrate what they would have read. She does this to keep these learners occupied whilst she has time with the struggling learners. T3 agreed with T2. From line 115 T3 says, "...remember that as much as those that are "fast"

(academically privileged), *that are eloquent, those that are fast also need to be given an opportunity or attention as those who cannot decode and those who cannot read.*" She gives more time to those who are challenged in reading because she points out that, *"As soon as a child struggles to decode or even mispronounces the word, it's obvious the comprehension is gone."* A learner won't be able to understand what he or she has read.

To support the struggling learners, T4 said she does not let them read to the whole class to avoid awkwardness to the learners. T3 in line 175, doesn't allow these learners to read aloud to the class. They both say they call them to their tables and read with them whilst others are busy with something else. T3 allowed them to read as softly as they can, right next to her. She can put the book or text away and go back to sounds. She uses pictures to help master the sounds. If the learners still can't master sounds, the teacher then refers the learner to the SBST of the school.

T2 line 128-131, stated that she has a reading corner. She has created this space to encourage reading in her class. *"Then I pull out my books, hard ones; the thick ones. I give them so that they don't get bored. Then I tell them, 'you know what, I am giving you these books, tomorrow you will come and tell me what you read, until where you read. It works for me."* She doesn't keep all the reading books in her class by the corner for safety reasons. She keeps some of them in the store room. T3 in line 91 is of the opinion that if a teacher wants her learners to have an interest in reading, *"there should be a conducive reading corner"*. It must be presented in a way to attract learners to visit the reading corner.

As an initiative to support independent learners, T1 in lines 220-223 said that there are extra books that she uses to support reading and she keeps these in the storeroom. She uses these books as extension work. She even allows them to take these books home, to read to their families and as a quality check, she gives them time to narrate what they have read at home in class.

Learners feel encouraged and chances of improving on confidence are high when they get such support from their teachers. Teachers also, will get motivated and can even plan on the way forward to help learners become better readers, hence improvement in other learning subjects.

Research has shown that South Africa has one of the lowest literacy levels, internationally (Spaull, 2016; Taylor, 2008a; 2008b). As teachers that deal with learners on a day-to-day basis, the participants offer suggestions on how to assist to improve the reading situation in the country.

T2 in line 216, thought there is need for more resources like books to read (like a series), and is against the use of worksheets as she claims worksheets promote laziness among learners as they merely fill in answers, and not much reading. She stressed reinforcement to help learners improve. If learners are struggling, she thinks it is a good idea to retain them, for some perform better after being retained. T2 highlighted the importance of placing trained personnel in the classes and have them attend workshops intermittently. She valued the Government Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS) programme that was in place at her school. She seemed aggrieved at the ongoing changes in education curriculum.

Considering that the DoE had introduced Curriculum Coverage (CC), teachers alluded to this not working at all. T2 in line 275 said, *"You know these people just want to prove a point that now I am leading. Now I need to be seen. This is me, that's what I think because there is nothing wrong with what we were using."* Line 279, *"...Everyone that comes, they want to leave their mark. Which I think is what is hurting our education or literacy because you just get frustrated. We are given paper work and paper work and people get frustrated. Maybe that's why they don't even care how they are teaching..."* These utterances are an indication that the Department of Education has been very prescriptive thus far, in the sense that teachers are required to rigidly follow the CAPS document without any flexibility when dealing with diverse learners with different cognitive levels of performance. The huge amount of paperwork is also a hindering factor as the time spent on administrative work could be channelled towards teaching reading.

The importance of having "libraries" and "media centres" in schools is highlighted by Lutrin and Pincus (2007), This practice is evident at School A and B. Libraries are meant to be well stocked with reading material to enhance reading and the librarians are there to assist in recommending suitable books. If a learner approaches them, they should be able to assist with the right book. When considering the ages of the learners in the FP, most of them need guidance on how to handle a book and on making the

right choice of books. As a result, the librarians at the two schools conducted research and included special programmes specifically designed for the different classes and grades, bearing in mind that not all learners have the same reading ability.

T1 and T2 from school A have remediation lessons for learners who experience challenges in reading. These learners remain in the class when others go to the library for two sessions a week, 30 minutes per session. T2 line 140 said, *“there is a programme designed which we send them to in the library”*, then she gets time to give support to the struggling learners. T2 in line 26 expressed herself by saying; *“reading is not taken as important as it should”*. In lines 28-30, the reason behind being; *“I think it’s up there that need to be corrected. Now we need to start from the base because I think our leaders or the Minister of Education is not aware of exactly what happens in the classroom....”* In support of the same view, T3 in lines 362-378 said, *“If the department can just come up with one programme that at least can be facilitated (continued) over a period of 5 years. What they do is, they come up with one programme, after 6 months they come with another one. Then whatever they have trained them on has to be evaluated and say; ‘what has worked for us in this period?’*

A “systematic evaluation” at exit phase levels (Grades 3, 6 and 9) in public schools, done after every 3 years may benefit the education system as a whole in terms of literacy. The ANA (Annual National Assessment), (DOE, 2012) can be regarded as ineffective. When “problems/challenges” are diagnosed, intervention programmes are developed, but implementation is poor, hence progress is slow. T3, in line 233 strongly articulated that, *“SMTs need to source more resources in the FP because that is where the foundation for all learning is built”*. T3 added in line 248, *“without FP basically there is no matric...that’s where monitoring and development need to be done...for me, Grade 12 is like a roof for the whole building...you start taking care of the roof while you have forgotten about the foundation, that is how that house is going to collapse”*. In line 265, she clearly stated that, “The point of reference is clear, “FP teachers teach learners how to read and Intermediate Phase (IP) teachers teach them to learn.”

The importance of reading should be made explicit to all stakeholders, teachers, parents and learners must work together for the improvement of education, as mentioned by T3, in line 209. She said, *“Parents play a very vital role in bettering their children as well as in the education system.”* From line 356, she emphasised that

leadership in all schools need to change their focus and focus on the importance of having a “solid, well organised, highly qualified, dedicated and committed Foundation Phase in all schools. She boldly said, *“I will be lying if I say the department is not doing anything. If the leadership of different schools, or let me say, if leadership can change their focus and draw it to the importance of having a FP in their school and allow them to buy as much material as they can when it comes for the learners...”*

The researcher provides sample of pictures taken in the classrooms to demonstrate the availability of resources and interventions to support literacy acquisition among Grade 2. These are samples of activities, resources, DBE workbook, reading chart and a reading corner that enhances and promotes in Grade 2 learners, a love for the skill of reading.





Sample of Reading Resources used by Grade 2 teachers in their classrooms.

4.4 Theme four: The assessment of reading in Grade 2

Silbert et al., (2011) describes assessment standards as the level at which learners demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcome(s) and the ways (depth and breadth) of demonstrating their achievement. The teacher's duty is to monitor the learners' progress and grade them specifically according to how they perform. There

are different learning areas in Languages that the teachers should assess learners on. According to the DoE, (2011a), the CAPS document includes: Listening and Speaking, Reading and Viewing, Writing, Thinking and Reasoning and Language Structure and Use and learners ought to be assessed in all these areas for holistic reading development.

Teachers assess learners' progress or lack thereof by using a wide variety of methods, tools and techniques to evaluate, measure and document academic readiness, learning progress, skills acquisition and educational needs. All four teachers indicated that they conduct spelling assessment tests on Fridays. Words relevant to the themes in the curriculum are given to learners on Monday and the learners are expected to learn how to spell these words. Revision is done throughout the week to enhance learning of the words. T1 in line 47-49 mentioned that, *"Every week we give them homework for the whole week...Friday they write a test..."* T2 from line 82 stated, *"We give them (learners) words on Monday. During the week we do all those words. We do sentences, we do meanings. You know each day is different and on Friday they write about those words..."* T4 in line 154 highlighted, *"I give them homework on Monday..."*

The teachers obtain words from DBE blue books or from the curriculum plan, though at times the words for the week in the blue book clash with the words stipulated in the curriculum coverage. They have different activities that they do throughout the week to help learners master these words. The activities include sentence construction, word building and word meaning. The flashcards are used throughout the week to help remind the learners of the words.

Another strategy that the teachers use to assess learners' reading ability is by assessing their fluency and expression in reading. T2 from lines 91-99, mentioned that she uses flashcards to assess knowledge of sounds/letters of alphabets and rubrics to assess their reading fluency and reading expression.

T2 explained; *"We have a rubric page when you assess reading. It's how fluent and how the child is able to read the words. Like, she doesn't struggle/ stutter or... if the learner can be able to read the whole sentence fluently and shows expression"*. (an example of the rubric is provided below in Table 4.3

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	MARKS (10)
Unable to read and recognize words.	0 – 1
Unable to read but can recognize a few words.	2 – 3
Able to recognize words and read with some confidence.	4 – 6
Able to recognize words, read and comprehend.	7 – 8
Able to recognize words, read fluently, with expression and comprehend with ease.	9 -10

Table 4.3 Rubric for Reading Assessment

Rubrics are very helpful to the teacher, as she is able to determine which learners need intervention and support, *“Some learners are struggling to a point that they can’t read even a sentence. Then you have got those ones that try”*. She went on to say there are some who are able to read but without fluency. The rubric is also used to rate the struggling learners, who cannot read at all.

T3 from line 135 pointed out that as a school they have special cards that they have designed, with criteria, that assist her (as a teacher) to evaluate learners’ progress in reading. The cards can help with retention/progress purposes. *“Cause we have got these reading cards that we have designed so that parents can also take accountability. You know to say; I was listening to...in the evening, she read page 4 to 5...”*

T4, in lines 47-62 said; *“we read them (words) together repeatedly. Then I give them another text that is different from the ones but with the same sound because I want them to identify the sound that we have learnt and these words that they have never seen before”*. T4 indicated that this has worked for her, *“so far it works for me. It’s either in the beginning of the word or at the end of the word. Sometimes it happens that it’s in the middle of the word. Once they find the sound that they have learnt, they must try to put the word together, in Grade 2, mostly, we are doing double sounds-diagraphs...”* The idea of assimilation by Piaget’s theory of cognitive development is being practised by the teacher when the learners apply what they have learnt when approaching new information. The ability of the learners being able to move to another level or struggling to move on applies to the principle of Erikson’s developmental stages, trust versus mistrust, Erikson, (1950). When the learners have acquired the necessary skill with confidence, in this case, encoding and decoding, they are able to move onto the next level of knowledge acquisition. This idea is supported by Wardle

(2009, p.139-140) who talks of pattern making, as teachers first demonstrate simple assimilations/patterns and then proceed to more complicated concepts.

When assessing learners, the teachers highlight the importance of looking at ability levels and teachers use the Blooms Taxonomy to grade assessments according to the cognitive abilities of their learners.

The researcher provides a sample of the recording that teachers use for progress purposes in Table 4.4 below.

Names of learners	Phonic Single sounds	Blends- Diagraphs	Story telling Oral	Spelling Test written	Reading Short stories	Reading books x 2	Compre- hension x 1
Total	26	20	20	20	20	20	20
Rorisang	20	20	18	19	18	17	15
Joshua	20	20	17	20	17	16	16
Chimereze	20	20	18	20	18	17	16
Shalom	20	20	18	20	18	16	16
Bokang	20	18	17	19	16	15	15
Tapiwana	18	16	15	15	12	13	12
Alois	14	14	11	10	08	09	07
Keen	20	20	17	18	16	14	13
Brandon	16	14	12	09	07	05	03
Kimberley	20	18	15	15	12	13	11
Chiedza	20	18	15	14	14	13	12
Vimbayi	20	20	18	20	18	15	12
Kaitlyn	20	20	17	20	17	15	13
Haneefa	20	20	18	18	18	14	11
Tinovimba	20	18	14	13	14	12	09
Faith	20	20	18	17	16	16	12
Thembelihle	17	14	13	11	09	10	08
Allegreese	20	20	14	18	17	12	11

Table 4.4 Sample of a recording sheet for monitoring literacy and reading progress

4.3.5 Theme Five: Teachers' perceptions of the resource materials supplied by the Department of Education

According to DoE, (2011a) and DoE, (2011b) and DoE, LTSM (2018), the Department of Basic Education, (DBE) introduced workbooks for learners' use (Grade R – 9), free of charge, to all public schools in South Africa. These workbooks, called Blue Books (BB) are meant to improve Literacy and Numeracy skills of learners. Each learner from Grades 1-9 received two workbooks per year (one per each semester). The workbooks consist of up to 128 easy-to-follow worksheets, 4 per week, divided over eight weeks per term that comply with the CAPS curriculum.

All four participants use these BBs in different ways. T1 and T2 from School A are happy with these books; T1, in lines 237-245 stated that she is content with the books as *"they are appropriate to the learners' level"*. She was just concerned with the extra marking load that comes with the use of these books. T1 claimed the work in DBE book and the work in workbook correlate, they support each other. In lines 251-258 she further gave an explanation that,

"in the DBE book they give you about 10 words for the learners to read and the 5 sight words. In those 10, I always break them to say, 'today we are going to write 5 words in our exercise books. We will write the 5 words and then I say let's make 1 sentence each from (using) each word, we then talk about the pictures. Then they will say write a sentence about what you see on the picture. Then they will write a sentence."

In lines 262 to 263, T1 shedded light on the procedure she follows; *"we start with the DBE and then later I go to the exercise book. The department wants us to follow it because the Curriculum Coverage goes together with DBE."* She said all this goes hand in hand with the CAPS document as the themes and topics are similar. To her it means they have to use those workbooks even though they (DBE) are prescriptive. Sometimes she deviates from the prescribed topics that are expected to be covered in class, for example, when talking about aeroplanes as a means of transport, T1, tried to create contexts to which learners are familiar with, she discussed, *"using a bus or taxi' or even ask if there is anyone who has been in an aeroplane before.* They discuss modes of transport that everyone understands and can identify with in regards to aspects of listening and speaking about the topic/s.

T2 said BB books are not stereotyped. They cater for all individuals. She has noticed most of the stories in the DBE blue books don't change. She writes them on flashcards for discussion purposes. They converse about the story before they read them so that the learners will have an idea of what they are going to read about. She explained exactly how she uses the flashcards, *"I paste them on the board. If I am using flashcards about the story, I paste them then we talk about them"*. The learners then read the words. Bearing in mind the learners' differences, T2 pointed out there is always those 2 or 3 learners who can read all the words. T1 and T2 are therefore contented with the DBE books. The books cater for poor readers and good readers. In line 156 she insisted, *"they are easy to work with"*. They even advised that teachers should be able to find ways to get learners understand if they cannot identify with the content.

T3 and T4 from School B use the DBE books for activities, as they claimed that a large number of learners do not identify with the content of the books, due to lack of diverse content. T3 from line 381 just said, *"Well those books from the department, yes they are books from the department. They are activity books that we use. So what we have decided to do as a school...we took the curriculum and tried to dismantle it and align it in such a way that there is coherence in whatever that we can teach..."* then T4 from line 196 said, *"With IsiZulu especially, I like teaching it the least. The way it is structured; I am a Zulu and that's the language I know the best. So I don't think it was structured in a proper way because you will find out that we are doing a singular sound but the pages that they are referring to will be asked to read words that are tri-graphs; way difficult..."*

T1 suggested that DBE remove the supply of BBs and instead use that budget to hire remedial teachers or therapists for each and every school. This measure will improve teaching and learning in all schools.

In contrast to teachers in School A, teachers in School B have a different view with regard to the use of department resource materials. T4, found out that the DBE books, *"of least use, especially the IsiZulu books because of the way they are structured considering she is Zulu speaking"*. She gave an example of "single letters and tri-graphs mixed up". T3 says they don't follow the DBE rigidly, as a school, they have decided to use them as activity books. In lines 381-396, she has this to say; *"well,*

those books from the department, we use them as activity books, we took the curriculum and tried to dismantle it and align it in such a way that there is coherence in whatever that we teach. So we have said as teachers we are going to use what is relevant for our teaching”.

From the data, teachers place much emphasis on one resource, namely the DBE workbooks, or Blue Books. There also tends to be different interpretations on how to use these books in learning to read. The department, from a CHAT perspective, forms part of the community. In implementing the use of workbooks for all schools (referred to as tools in the activity system), the rules were neglected. If teachers were to use these books to teach reading and literacy, training should have been conducted with all schools. From the data, this does not appear to have been done, with some teachers finding a clear alignment between the curriculum in CAPS to the DBE books, while others find a lack of alignment.

4.3.6 Theme six: The Role of the School Based Support Team (SBST) and the School Assessment Team (SAT) in advancing reading in schools.

According to the DoE, (2014), it is the principal’s responsibility to establish a School-Based Support team and ensure its functionality and that it is fully supported. The suggested core members of the SBST are;

1. Teachers who are involved in the teaching of the particular learner(s) who experience barriers to learning;
2. Teachers with specialised skills and knowledge in areas such as learning support, life skills/guidance, or counselling;
3. Teachers from the school: these could be volunteers from their interest, or who represent various levels of the programme, e.g. FP, or who represent various learning areas, e.g. language and communication;
4. Teachers who are involved directly in the management of the school: this could be the principal, the deputy principal or another member of the management team;
5. Teachers on the staff who have particular expertise to offer around needs or challenges;
6. Non-educators from the school: this includes administrative care-taking staff. Parents/caregivers at an early childhood centre or school levels can be

considered to strengthen the team. Members of the District-Based support Team (DBST), members of the local community and teachers from other education institutions can all be considered for inclusion in the SBST.

All operational public schools ought to have a fully functional SBST and a SAT in place. Their roles are to identify, assess and evaluate learners' barriers and propose intervention programmes to assist teaching and learning. There should be well-defined protocols that explain how professional matters will be handled in school. When a teacher identifies a learner with learning challenges, he/she should be in a position to refer the identified learner to the SBST or SAT for intervention. The SBST or SAT team should then be in a position to contact the relevant personnel at the District Office to address the matter, be it an academic, psychological, emotional or physical support issue.

DoE (2014) explains the functions of the SBST as:

- study the report provided by the teacher on barriers identified and support provided/implemented up to that point, and the impact of that support.
- Assess support needed and develop a programme for teacher and parents;
- Provide training/support to be implemented in the classroom if necessary,
- Evaluate/monitor after the proposed programme has been implemented for a period agreed upon by SBST, teacher and parents. The kind of support to be provided to determine the length of a formal report which should be compiled by SBST;
- Identify further School-Based Support assets and mobilise;
- Encourage collegial support/peer support;
- The core purpose of these teams is to support the teaching and learning process.

The DoE (2014) further gives light on the key functions that relate to teaching and learning;

- Co-ordinating all learner, teacher, curriculum and school development support in the school. This includes linking the SBST to other school-based management structures and processes, or even integrating them in order to facilitate the co-ordination of activities and avoid duplication;

- Collectively identifying school needs and, in particular, barriers to learning at learner, teacher, curriculum and school levels;
- Collectively developing strategies to address these needs and barriers to learning. This should include a major focus on teacher development and parent consultation and support;
- Drawing in the resources needed, from within and outside the school, to address these challenges; and
- Monitoring and evaluating the work of the team within an 'action-reflection' framework.

All participants agreed on the important role the SBST and SAT play in their respective schools. T3, in line 194 indicates that she is aware of the school's SBST and SAT, and she applauds the strategies these teams utilize to assist struggling learners to read. School B has an advantage of having an educational psychologist on the school campus. If the SBST is unsuccessful in assisting learners with reading challenges, the educational psychologist steps in to do the relevant cognitive assessments. In line 201, T3 pointed out that, *"but remember we are not qualified (as teachers) to diagnose the neurological part basically. It's only the psychologists with the correct tools, to assist us, who can do that."* As a school, they don't forget to inform the parents on the intervention developments. The parent can then be advised to outsource other specialists if necessary.

The SBST and the SAT can be considered as the "nucleus" of the school in terms of support and assessment. With the proper structuring and activeness of the team, there is a possibility of fewer challenges that the school can face. As teams, the SBST and the SAT discuss the way forward and with the correct functional expertise, both these teams can work towards yielding positive learner outcomes towards overall school improvement.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave a detailed description of the processes involved in the data collection methods, namely, observations, document analysis and interviews; transcription of data, coding and categorizing of data and the emergence of themes.

The chapter concluded with a detailed arrangement of the six themes derived from the analysis of the data categories. The themes are supported with quotations from the participants (either direct and/or indirect), observation notes and analysis of documents.

The next chapter, Chapter five offers a summary of all five chapters; the findings of this investigation; some recommendations and the concluding remarks to this scientific study.



CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to investigate the teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 at two primary schools in the Gauteng Province. In investigating this topic, the previous chapter presented and discussed the analysis and interpretation of the data which was collected using qualitative methods. The purpose of this concluding chapter is to summarise the study. To this end, the current chapter presents a general overview of the preceding chapters, which is followed by a summary of the key findings of the entire study. This is followed by recommendations based on the findings, thereafter, recommendations for further research in this field of study are provided. The concluding remarks are stated next.

A summary of the entire research study ensues in the following section.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter one began with the introduction, background and overview of the study. The theoretical framework underpinning the study was outlined. The research questions and sub-questions, aims and objectives of the study were clearly stated followed by the research design and methods employed in the investigation. Lastly, the ethical considerations underpinning this study concluded this chapter.

Chapter two presented an in-depth review of literature relevant to the teaching and assessing of reading at Grade 2 level. Specific research studies conducted by other scholars in this field and relevant to this study were interrogated and reported in this chapter.

Chapter three gave a detailed description of the research design, methods and instruments used to collect data for this study. The theoretical framework, CHAT, which framed this study was explained. The research sites, population, sample, data collection and analysis as well as the research ethical measures that were observed were outlined.

Chapter four comprised of a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the data collected for this study. The analysis and presentation of the data included direct and rephrased quotations from the interviews conducted with the participants. Six themes emerged from this study. They are:

- Theme 1: Teachers' attitude and approaches to teaching and assessing reading.
- Theme 2: Challenges experienced by Grade two teachers when teaching and assessing reading.
- Theme 3: The types of intervention required to enhance teaching and assessment of reading
- Theme 4: The assessment of reading in Grade two.
- Theme 5: Teachers' perception of the resource materials supplied by the Department of Basic Education.
- Theme 6: The role of the School Based Support Team (SBST) and the School Assessment Team (SAT) in advancing reading in Grade 2 learners.

Chapter five, being the concluding chapter will discuss the findings from the study and also offer possible recommendations and implications for further research as well as implications of this research investigation for educational practitioners, researchers and policy makers.

5.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section summarises the research findings emanating from literature and the scientific data collected from the participants in relation to the research questions, aims and objectives of the study.

5.3.1 Finding one

Teacher characteristics, pedagogical practices and use of resources were deemed important in the teaching of reading by all research participants. The teachers who were sampled in this study were all experienced in teaching in the foundation phase. Teachers placed a great deal of emphasis on the multiple strategies they employed to

teach reading. They also placed emphasis on the strict adherence to the stipulated time-frames to teach reading, as per the CAPS document. Teachers recognised the benefits of learning to read, a skill much needed to fit in with an evolving technologically advanced society.

However, the use of CHAT as a lens highlighted the gaps in the strategies used to teach reading in the foundation phase. Teachers placed much emphasis on decoding, pronunciation, fluency and oral reading but learners' understandings of the text was limited. Teachers use visual teaching aids such as flash cards but the focus was on individual words in isolation. The teachers made no mention of the need to elicit meaning and comprehension of what these words convey in a text. Their silence in this area leads me to conclude that they may not have sufficient pedagogic content knowledge to teach reading with comprehension. As expressed by Spaul et al. (2018, p. 4) "the aim of reading instruction is for children to understand what the written alphabetic code conveys in any text." Although it is important to identify letters and sound the words correctly, it is important for teachers to purposefully take this foundation to the next level, which is to elicit understanding. If not, learners will learn to recognise letters and words without having an understanding of its meaning in context.

Another aspect silent in the data was testing the speed at which learners read. Spaul et al., (2018) argue that a learner who struggles to read will not pay much attention to comprehension. In fact, they indicate that "a difference of a few milliseconds can signal difficulty or success in cognitive functioning." Accuracy, speed and comprehension are the three attributes viewed as important in reading Spaul et al. (2018). Teachers in this study seem to focus only on accuracy and have neglected speed and accuracy. Despite their efforts of using multiple teaching strategies, and their innovativeness with creating resources, their focus in doing so was on teaching for accuracy or as termed by Rule and Land (2017), oratorical reading. Smithers and Robinson (2005) assert that high quality teaching rests upon the teachers' understanding of the subject, sequence and structure of the concepts to develop factual knowledge essential in guiding learners towards the relevant knowledge acquisition for reading. The NEEDU report (2013) highlights the problems of teachers' lack of pedagogic content knowledge which results in teachers blindly following CAPS without understanding what it entails. What is needed is including one comprehension

strategy to elicit understanding at a time, for example, asking questions while reading, visualise texts, or asking learners to predict what will follow or to retell a story (Gill, 2008). Teachers therefore need practical examples on how to invoke higher order thinking while teaching reading.

5.3.2 Finding two

The data confirms the difficulties that teachers endure in teaching reading in the foundation phase classrooms. These include lack of parental support, lack of resources, pressure from the education department to adhere to strict time-frames, large classes, and most importantly, teaching reading to learners who are second or third language speakers. Teachers need greater support in addressing these challenges in the classroom.

Learners' constant misdemeanour during reading lessons affects their teaching and learning and learners' progress and this can be debilitating for teachers. From the data, one of the main reasons for this is learners' inability to read as per the required levels for Grade 2. This creates a lot of uneasiness for these learners, especially when they are required to read aloud in the presence of the teacher and their peers. They then resort to unruly behaviour as a form of distraction so that the focus of the teacher moves to managing disruptive behaviour rather than on the reading difficulties faced by learners. Another reason is the large class sizes, as cited by participants in this research. Research confirms a negative relationship between large classes, discipline and lower academic achievement (Pasternak, 2013).

Another challenge according to the four participants is the lack or absence of parental support, which is crucial to a healthy working relationship among all stakeholders. As pointed out by Rule and Land (2017), parents are the first teachers of their children and play an important role in introducing children to reading. A child who grows up in a print-rich environment (Hunter, 2015) whereby parents or even siblings are always reading books, magazines or even newspapers, he or she develops an interest in reading. The values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and practices related to reading activities that children acquire indirectly at home, the more strongly the influence will be on how prepared children are for reading. Parents themselves reading at home

serves as a form of modelling to their children. One of the problems cited by Rule and Land (2017) is a lack of reading materials at home, with children sometimes being exposed only to hymn books and old newspapers. The only books that children more often have to read are the textbooks given to them from school. I would also add that poverty is a barrier that prevents parents from buying story books or newspapers regularly. Moreover, their long working hours does not leave them with much time to read for leisure.

Considering the large number of learners (more than the accepted ratio of 1:40) in primary schools, teachers face countless challenges in resource provisioning on a daily basis. How can young learners (=/- 7 years old) learn to read independently, confidently, fluently and with expression, when more than 2 learners share 1 reader during a reading lesson? The four participants alluded to specific grade planning and preparation of their reading lessons. This is an important facet to successful monitoring and evaluation of progress in reading per phase. The issue of insufficient LTSM at schools is a national problem. Hence a large percentage of schools fail to provide simple readers and adequate stationery for effective teaching and learning to take place.

5.3.3 Finding three

Despite the challenges experienced, teachers were extremely resourceful in the type of interventions that was applied to assist learners who were experiencing difficulties in reading. If the outcomes of ensuring that learners learn to read with understanding is to be achieved, the intervention must begin in the classroom. However, as discussed in theme 1, if teachers lack the pedagogic content knowledge to teach reading in the foundation phase effectively, interventions in the classroom that they may apply will not be successful. Professional development interventions is needed rather than more classroom interventions for children (Scanlon, Gelzheiser, Vellutino, Schatschneider, & Sweeney, 2008). Too much attention is given to children and where they are going wrong but too little is given to teachers and their classroom instruction (Scanlon et al., 2008).

5.3.4 Finding four

When teachers assess reading, learners are expected to apply their knowledge and skills pertinent to reading concepts that they would have learnt to demonstrate their competency. There are different methods of assessing reading and many types of assessments applicable to reading, for example, individual reading to the teacher, spelling and comprehension (see Tables 4. 3 and 4. 4). By utilising these methods, learners can be graded according to their overall ability levels. Creative teachers will offer learners various opportunities to be assessed, for both developmental and progression purposes. Relevant intervention programmes can then be accordingly drawn up.

From the assessments, it is clear that the teachers are assessing a range of aspects in reading. Because reading is a multifaceted process, it is necessary to assess a range of skills. There however seems to be a disjuncture between what is assessed and what is taught. The strategies used to teach reading did not place much emphasis on comprehension yet it features in the assessments and forms one of the five main components to the teaching of reading in the FP, according to CAPS. Moreover, assessment of reading seems to take place as a separate activity and not integrated into the everyday classroom activity. The actual reading that takes place everyday is not used as an opportunity to assess. Teachers do not have to take time away from learning to read for assessment (Valencia, 1990).

5.3.5 Finding Five

Teachers reliance on the DBE books to teach reading is an indication that they want to be told what, when and how to teach. This may be indicative of their lack of confidence in their ability to teach reading effectively. Their strong reliance on the DBE books means that they needed to have a good understanding of how to use the exercises in the book to elicit learner understanding. However, no mention was made of teachers attending any workshops to prepare them on how to use the material. There have been many projects implanted in South Africa, aimed at improving the quality of reading. These projects include, amongst others, the foundations for learning campaign (2008), Early Grade Reading and Assessment (2006), and the read to learn campaign (2015). However, if teachers cannot deliver the interventions with high quality and intensity, the efforts are fruitless (Thompson & William, 2007). Such

interventions are successful if teachers understand the changes and implement them correctly (Moore, Grove & Tietjen, 2017). Moreover, any professional development initiatives must not be a once-off intervention (Moore et al., 2017).

5.3.6 Finding Six

The SBST and SAT should be operational, functional and visible to all stakeholders, so that identifying learners who require intervention in reading is hugely possible. Since the role of the SBST or SAT is to identify, assess and evaluate learners' barriers and propose intervention programmes to assist in the teaching and learning processes, the presence of multi-disciplinary teams in public schools are deemed necessary and valuable. Hence the assistance provided to learners should entail a holistic approach with support from different professionals, for example, psychologists, social workers, speech therapists etcetera. Leadership in the school is important in ensuring that all teachers share the same goals and values with regards to teaching and learning (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001). They need to set the direction and create conditions for teachers to work effectively (Taylor, 2008). This will mean ensuring that resources are available to teach, that teachers manage their time well and that effective measures are put in place to involve parents to a greater extent. The onus does not rest entirely on the teacher in the classroom but involves all key role players.

Arising from the findings, the following recommendations are suggested.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Recommendation one

The study recommends a baseline assessment required for reading competence be conducted early in the year when Grade 1 learners progress into Grade 2. Every attempt should be made to identify/diagnose any inadequacies/shortfalls in the learners' reading and this should be undertaken as early as possible by the Grade 2 teacher. The aim of this assessment is to provide support to learners (where needed)

to enable them to become confident and independent readers early into Grade 2, in preparation for more challenging work expected in Grade 2.

5.4.2 Recommendation two

Smithers and Robinson (2005) in National College for Teaching and Leadership acknowledge subject content knowledge as a major element, along with teaching skills. It is imperative for teachers to have the relevant PCK of the subjects they teach/deliver. There should be continuous upgrading of teachers' PCK through relevant seminars, workshops etcetera hosted by the department of education. Teaching learners in the initial FP grades 1 and 2 require highly specialised skills and often schools are faced with redeployment of teachers without any training in FP and these teachers are expected to teach in the the FP phase. These teachers experience great difficulty in teaching Grade 2 and choose to transfer into higher grades, which seemingly poses far less challenges. As an experienced Grade 2 teacher and having researched this topic, I am apprehensive about teachers who obtain a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE – qualification done over 1 year) and teach in FP education. In my opinion, having one year pre-service training in teacher education hardly qualifies a PGCE graduate to teach FP learners. This study therefore recommends that teachers who teach in the FP should obtain a teaching qualification consisting of four years of teacher training in FP education specifically.

5.4.3 Recommendation three

This study recommends parental involvement as a support structure to build stronger engagement among stakeholders in FP education. The notion of “in loco parentis” should be strengthened between parents and teachers. It is the duty of the school and the teachers to identify strategies to involve parents in the constructive learning of their children. As alluded to in finding two, effective and constant parental support and consultations/engagement between teachers/school and parents also paves the way for better and improved discipline among learners. In this way a growing community of learning can be formed where the schools become the centre of community learning.

5.4.4 Recommendation four

The presence of a multi-disciplinary team that handles academic, social and psychological matters/issues pertaining to learners' welfare is highly recommended. The SBST and SAT should comprise of experts such as, psychologists who work with early childhood issues, social workers, speech therapists etcetera. The Department of Education has a responsibility to protect the wellbeing of teachers in its employ. Appropriate support structures (for academic issues, social welfare and emotional issues) should be available to teachers and other staff in schools, since teachers and school staff who present with fatigue, stress and anxiety affect curriculum delivery in schools.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study of teaching and assessment of reading is crucial to the field of Childhood Education in South Africa. It has been found that a significant amount of research has been conducted on reading, however, how reading is taught and assessed in Grade two has not elicited much attention in South Africa. Therefore, this investigation has great potential in adding to the body of knowledge on reading.

The following areas may be considered for future research:

- A comparative case study may be conducted in two or more schools with different geographical/contextual backgrounds. The intention will be to determine if context or location of a school plays a role in teachers' approaches to teach reading.
- A longitudinal study of the effectiveness of teaching reading could be conducted over a period of three to four years in schools where educational resources are limited due to poor management in schools.
- A study of pre-service teachers/students and their preparation towards how to teach reading formally and incidentally from inception to Grade 3 should be undertaken.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In light of this investigation, each and every citizen in our country has an important role to play in creating a literate nation. Moreover, teachers in the FP play a significant role in the lives of many learners since initial reading commences in the FP. Teachers therefore require adequate support and intervention to ensure easy attainment of learning goals in schools.

This study highlights the importance of teachers own capacitation in lieu of the changing curriculum needs in public schools. Teachers need to utilize different approaches/techniques to assess learners and provide different/varying opportunities to help learners improve their reading competencies. There is ample research confirming the importance of teaching reading in the early grades, as this is where the foundation for ALL learning takes place. The introduction of research initiatives on exploring how reading is conducted in schools located in different regions will contribute immensely to the improvement of literacy levels of learners and the nation as a whole.

With regards to the assessment of reading, activities should be creative, challenging, motivating, age appropriate, monitored and evaluated for both developmental and progression purposes. Teachers should avoid over-assessing or even under-assessing learners' knowledge and skill. A learner- centred approach adopted for young learners has proven to be more successful. It encourages divergent thinking hence improving learners' independence and confidence in acquiring the necessary reading skills to become literate.

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7. LIST OF ADDENDUMS

7.1 Data Collection Instruments

7.1 a. Interview Protocol

Research Topic: The teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 at two public schools in the Gauteng Province.

Focus of the interview

The interview will be divided into three parts. The first part will focus on the teacher and the school in general to get a better idea on the teacher's experience, work environment and the kind of children they teach. The second part will focus on the teacher's personal thoughts and interpretation of teaching reading. Lastly, part three will look at how to teach reading. The following questions are a mere guideline and it is expected that the teachers will answer some of the later questions while speaking about reading.

Questions for Interviews

Part one

1. For how long have you been teaching?
2. Which grades have you been teaching?
3. How many years of experience do you have in grade 2?
4. What kinds of resources do you have to support reading?
5. What are the children like? (behaviour, attitude, motivation etc.)
6. What is the social economic background of the community? (financial support – fundraisings, school fees)
7. What is the parental involvement like? (homework supervision, projects)

8. What kind of support do you have with regard to reading? (scenario – when you have identified an academically challenged child)

Part two

1. Briefly tell me what you understand about reading.
2. How often do you do reading?
3. What challenges do you face when teaching reading?
4. How do the learners tackle reading?
5. Are the learners interested in reading?
6. What motivates you in teaching reading?
7. What do you like mostly about reading?
8. What demotivates you in teaching reading?
9. What is it you don't like about reading?

Part three

1. How do you introduce reading?
2. What are the methods that you use in teaching reading?
3. What are the methods you mostly use in the teaching of reading?
4. Are there any methods that you value more than the others? And why?
5. What kind of material do you use when teaching reading?
6. How do you support struggling readers?

7.1 b. Sample of Observation Schedule

Observations Reading Lesson

Research Study: The teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 in two public schools in Gauteng Province.

Number of Learners:

Teacher:

School: School A

Observations made by Researcher	Comments/Notes	Analysis of observations
- Seating arrangement of learners		
- Individual Reading or Group Reading		
- Material that was used for Reading		
- Position of Teacher during lesson		
- Did each learner have his/own reading material?		
- Type of reading material – book, card, chart, sentence strips etc.		
- Were learners seated or standing?		
Commencement of reading		
- Pre Reading activities done for recap/reinforcement of what learners have done already, eg. Phonemic reinforcement using work-cards, chalkboard, chart, sentences.		
- How did the teacher assess what the learners knew? Any follow-up		
- Observations of how the teacher started the actual reading activity.		

<p>- If group reading was done, which learner commenced reading?</p> <p>- Did the teacher allow learners to read in a certain order?</p> <p>- Was random reading done, eg, any learner was asked to follow-on with reading? - What was the purpose of this type of reading sequence? Did the teacher switch from “in sequence” according to seating/standing order to random readers?</p> <p>- Did the teacher pause/stop learners who were reading for corrections, pronunciation, fluency etc.?</p> <p>- How did the teacher check for understanding of what was being read?</p> <p>- Did the teacher ask only the learner/s who read to respond to her question/s?</p>		
- Teacher engagement and interaction during reading lesson		
- Learners engagement and interaction during reading lesson		
Post Reading Activities		
<p>- What follow –up activities were done?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal or written • Types of activities 		
Final Comments		

7.1 c. Sample of Document Analysis Schedule

Research Study: The teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 in two public schools in Gauteng Province. School A	
<p><u>CHECKLIST FOR DOCUMENTS</u></p> <p>1. <u>Documents</u></p> <p>Primary/Main documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAPS documents- prescribed by the DOE for all public schools • Lesson plans- from DOE document and individual teachers • Lesson schedules- from the DOE and participating teachers • Readers- individual, paired, group and class readers • DBE Blue books supplied by DOE • Workbooks- a learner's English book from each participating teacher for quality and quantity of activities <p>Other documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashcards/Phonic cards/alphabet cards- created by teachers to support words and themes of the week • Sentence strips- to reinforce words and themes of the week, used for incidental reading in class • Word cards- may be guided by pictures to help master the words; Aba cards- used to help build sentences as individuals, in pairs, groups or at whole class level. • Story books- may be big books or small story books. • Themes as per schedule and lesson plans • Library- books to support learning • Reading charts- reading and instructional charts • Sight words- on cards and or on chalkboard to reinforce reading 	<p><u>Available</u></p>
<p>Participants indicated the following during their engagement with the researcher.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

7.2 TRANSCRIPTIONS OF INTERVIEWS

SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPTION

ES: Researcher

T2: Teacher 2

1. ES: Good afternoon madam
2. T2: Good afternoon to you as well
3. ES: Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity that you are allowing us to interview you and
4. this interview is about the teaching of reading in grade 2.
5. T2: Okay
6. ES: What we are interested in knowing is: How do you teach reading? What are some of the
7. challenges that you face? And so on... At the outset I need to make you aware that we are
8. audio recording this interview. Are you okay with that?
9. T2: I am okay with that.
10. ES: The data we are going to get from this interview is only going to be used for research
11. purposes.
12. T2: Okay I do understand.
13. ES: Are you okay with that?
14. T2: I am
15. ES: You give us permission to record you?
16. T2: I do give you my permission
17. ES: Very briefly, tell us a little bit about yourself. How long have you been teaching? And
18. obviously you are teaching grade 2. What are your experiences in other grades? And so on...
19. T2: I have never taught any other grade since I have started teaching. I have been teaching
20. grade 2. And a bit about myself; I am a UJ student. I started working at
21. When this school opened we moved this side. But we were employed for this school. I am a
22. 32 year old. I have my own family. I am glad to be a teacher. I enjoy its ups and downs but
23. above all I love my work.
24. ES: That's great, that's wonderful. Tell me about; what do you think about reading in this
25. country?
26. T2: Reading is not taken as important as it should.
27. ES: Why?
28. T2: I think maybe it's up there that it needs to be corrected. Now we need to start
29. from the base because I think our leaders or the Minister of Education is not quite aware of

30. exactly what happens in the class. So I think with what we got we were fortunate to be in
31. the programme of UJ, of which we viewed the other side. And what else... for me reading is
32. basically what ...it opens our brains. If you can't read, you are not even...you can't get
33. information except that you are going to be told. But when you read you also open your own
34. path, if I can put it that way.

35. ES: Explain to me, I am so glad that you have been teaching grade 2 from the time you
36. started teaching which means you have got enough experience, but you are still learning.

37. ES: Explain to me: How do you go about teaching reading? Remembering that the basic
38. information must already have been done in grade 1. You are receiving them in grade 2.
39. What do you do with regard to reading in grade2?

40. T2: Okay. Firstly you find out where the learners are. What do they know?

41. ES: How do you find that out?

42. T2: I use my flashcards to see if they know their sounds, we teach sounds, that's where I
43. start. I also find out if they know their 3 letter words like pat, mat, bat.....

44. T2: I find out what they know, and I start by grouping them according to their abilities.

45. ES: Has that method worked for you?

46. T2: I think it has always worked for me because I don't work with what I don't know. I have
47. to find out where the learners are, then group them. Then after, in 3rd term that's where I
48. put those who are advanced to help those who are behind because they learn better –peer
49. learning. It's much better. You give them paired reading. You take the stronger one and the
50. weaker one. It helps the weaker one.

51. ES: Okay, right I got that. Now once you group them according to abilities and according to
52. what they are coming to you with in grade 2. What is the next thing that you do when it
53. comes to reading 1, what do you do in terms of the DBE workbooks?

54. T2: The DBE, mostly what I have done is that most of the stories in the DBE books because
55. they don't change. I have those flashcards but usually I talk about the story before we read.
56. Then take out the flashcards and we talk about the flashcards which helps to have an idea of
57. what the story might be about. Then from there we read together.

58. ES: Tell me exactly how do you use the flashcards?

59. T2: I paste them on the board. If I am using flashcards about the story, I paste them and
60. then we talk about them. I ask the learners to read. You know there is always that learner
61. who can read almost all the words that you have got. If not one you have got 2 to 3 because
62. you cannot really take advantage of maybe this is a big word like... the other day I had the
63. word 'sandwich'. Hoping that maybe they will be stuck but then I heard, 'sandwich madam'.

64. Then you know and you talk about – what is a sandwich. And they tell you. And you get an

65. idea what the story might be and then they start predicting and tell you the story is about

66. food or someone making a sandwich. So usually that's what happens when you are... before

67. you read the story.

68. ES: Do you do reading every day?

69. T2: Mostly I think I do reading every day. Even if I do not do shared reading but I always tell a

70. story at the end of the day.

71. ES: Before they go home?

72. T2: Yes, before they go home.

73. ES: Why do you think that is important?

74. T2: It calms them down. I think for vocabulary as well. I don't know why I do it?

75. ES: Do you have a spelling test that you do?

76. T2: Yes we do have a test every Friday.

77. ES: Do you give them the words?

78. T2: Yes. We give them words on Monday. During the week we do all those words. We do

79. sentences, we do meaning. You know each day is different and on Friday they write about

80. those words. Usually it's a sound that we are doing for the week. For example, last week we

81. were doing 'ay' as in a...y. 'ay' for pay. So there is a sound that I have got big, then the

82. flashcards and the pictures and those words.

83. ES: Do you assess reading?

84. T2: yes I do

85. ES: Explain to me how you assess reading.

86. T2: We have a rubric page. When you assess reading, it's how fluent and how the child is

87. able to read the words like, she doesn't struggle/stutter or

88. ES: Tell me a bit about the rubric.

89. T2: If the learner can be able to read the whole sentence fluently and shows expression.

90. Cause some learners do show expression which is how we also model when we are reading.

91. So they also have to see from the teacher that, 'oh the teacher doesn't just read-the boy is

92. walking'. I have to show them, 'the boy, is walking' (with expression). The rubric also talks

93. about the weak learners, those who can't read a sentence. Some learners are struggling to a

94. point that they can't read even a sentence. Then you have got those ones that try. Those

95. that can read, 'the boy is playing'.

96. ES: But there is no fluency?

97. T2: There is no fluency, yes.

7.3 CONSENT LETTER TO PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES



1st August 2017

LETTER OF CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

For Attention: The Principal/School Governing Body

_____ Primary School

Dear Sir/Madam

In South Africa, there is ongoing concerns about the development of learners' literacy skills with an increasing number of learners who present many reading challenges in the classroom. The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshega, has highlighted these challenges in her press statement for the Annual National Assessment (ANA) (2012) where she states that it "is worrying precisely because the critical skills of literacy and numeracy are fundamental to further education and achievements in the world of education and work. Many learners lack proper foundations in literacy and numeracy and so struggle to progress in the school system and into post-school education and training". Such a view is supported by data from the Department of Education, Evaluation Assessment Tests for Reading (2008), which shows that only 15% of learners in Grade 6 achieved the required literacy level.

Research on early reading instruction in South African classrooms is limited to some extent according to many scholars who have researched "reading and literacy levels" in South Africa. When considering the PIRLS survey, conducted in 2006 and 2011 in South Africa ranks amongst the lowest in the participating countries. The extent to

which language factors contribute to the poor performance is not clear as language disadvantages are so highly correlated with other confounding factors like historical disadvantage, socio-economic status, geography, the quality of school management and the teaching competence of teachers within our country.

In view of the background explained above, I will be investigating the “teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2. The following research questions will direct this investigation: How do teachers teach and assess reading in Grade 2? What are the experiences of Grade 2 teachers when teaching and assessing reading in Grade 2? What planning and preparation precedes the teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2? How do Grade 2 teachers address any challenges in their teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2?

Through participating in this interview, you will be assisting me to improve the teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2. The findings of the research will be made available to you to enrich your own understanding, develop new skills and efficacy pertaining to the teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2. Kindly note that all information provided is confidential and you are at liberty to withdraw without penalty from this research study at any point. We want your honest opinions/views/perspectives. The findings of this research study will be made available to you and the school upon its completion. I appreciate your participation in this investigation and I thank you.

Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Edith Shambamuto (Researcher)

Contact Details: 0839989397 Email address: edithshambamuto@yahoo.com

Dr Parvathy Naidoo and Dr Sarita Ramsaroop. (Supervisor and Co-supervisor)

Work 011 559 4759 /011 559 2681/011 559 5243

Permission is granted to Edith Shambamuto to conduct individual interviews with two Grade 2 teachers at my school.

Name and Signature of Principal

School Governing Body

School stamp:

Please send confirmation via email or text message to the above addresses.



7.4 CONSENT LETTER TO TEACHERS



1st August 2017

LETTER OF CONSENT TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

For Attention: The Principal/School Governing Body

_____ Primary School

Dear M/s /Mrs. _____ (participants name)

In South Africa, there is ongoing concerns about the development of learners' literacy skills with an increasing number of learners who present many reading challenges in the classroom. The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshega, has highlighted these challenges in her press statement for the Annual National Assessment (ANA) (2012) where she states that it "is worrying precisely because the critical skills of literacy and numeracy are fundamental to further education and achievements in the world of education and work. Many learners lack proper foundations in literacy and numeracy and so struggle to progress in the school system and into post-school education and training". Such a view is supported by data from the Department of Education, Evaluation Assessment Tests for Reading (2008), which shows that only 15% of learners in Grade 6 achieved the required literacy level.

When considering the PIRLS survey, conducted in 2006 and 2011 in South Africa ranks amongst the lowest in the participating countries. The extent to which language factors contribute to the poor performance is not clear as language disadvantages are so highly correlated with other confounding factors like historical disadvantage, socio-

economic status, geography, the quality of school management and the teaching competence of teachers within our country.

In view of the background explained above, I will be investigating the “teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2. The following research questions will direct this investigation: How do teachers teach and assess reading in Grade 2? What are the experiences of Grade 2 teachers when teaching and assessing reading in Grade 2? What planning and preparation precedes the teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2? How do Grade 2 teachers address any challenges in their teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2?

I hereby invite you to participate in this interview, you will be assisting me to improve the teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2. The findings of the research will be made available to you to enrich your own understanding, develop new skills and efficacy pertaining to the teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2. Kindly note that all information provided is confidential and you are at liberty to withdraw without penalty from this research study at any point. We want your honest opinions/views/perspectives. The findings of this research study will be made available to you and the school upon its completion. I appreciate your participation in this investigation and I thank you.

Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Edith Shambamuto (Researcher)

Contact Details: 0839989397 Email address: edithshambamuto@yahoo.com

Dr Parvathy Naidoo and Dr Sarita Ramsaroop. (Supervisor and Co-supervisor)

Work 011 559 4759 /011 559 2681/011 559 5243

I hereby give permission to Edith Shambamuto to conduct an individual interview with me. I will be notified of the date, venue and time of interview.

Name and Signature of Teacher

Principal

School stamp:

Please send confirmation via email or text message to the above addresses.



7.5 ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG



ETHICS CLEARANCE

Dear E Shambamuto

Ethical Clearance Number: 2017-103

The teaching and assessment of reading in Grade 2 at two public schools in the Gauteng Province

Ethical clearance for this study is granted subject to the following conditions:

- ☐ If there are major revisions to the research proposal based on recommendations from the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted.
- ☐ If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, it remains the duty of the student to submit a new application.
- ☐ It remains the student's responsibility to ensure that all ethical forms and documents related to the research are kept in a safe and secure facility and are available on demand.
- ☐ Please quote the reference number above in all future communications and documents.

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has decided to

- ☒ Grant ethical clearance for the proposed research.
- ☐ Provisionally grant ethical clearance for the proposed research
- ☐ Recommend revision and resubmission of the ethical clearance documents

Sincerely,

Prof Geoffrey Lautenbach

Chair: FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

6 October 2017

7.8 GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	31 August 2017
Validity of Research Approval:	06 February 2017 – 29 September 2017 2017/239
Name of Researcher:	Shambamuto E.
Address of Researcher:	26 Olga Kirsch Street Ridgeway, Extension 1 Johannesburg, 2091
Telephone Number:	011 680 5343 083 998 9397
Email address:	edithshambamuto@yahoo.com
Research Topic:	The teaching and assessing of reading in Grade 2 at two public schools in the Gauteng Province
Number and type of schools:	Two Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg Central

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

[Signature] 06/09/2017

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

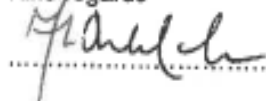
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Ms Faith Tshabalala

CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 06/09/2017